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DEDICATION.



**TO THE BEST AND DEAREST FELLOW IN THE
WHOLE WORLD—THE FATHER OF THE
FOUR YOUNG MAIDENS.**

P R E F A C E.

DEAR READERS, — I am very fond of you ; I hope we shall not part forever. It was *too* stupid of Chandos, that prolonged stay in Hindostan, and there is a dear girl whom you and I know who hasn't got any husband, — many dear girls in fact, but this one *ought* to be married. We are anticipating gay doings at Craigenfels. Uncle Alec is famous as host, and he is making gorgeous preparations for a grand Christmas party, and the dear old fellow has given me *carte blanche* to bid whom I like to his Barmecidian feast ; therefore, dear

readers, please invite your friends, and the friends of your friends' friends. Let us all be there with holiday faces, and souls attuned to enjoyment.

JULIE P. SMITH.

CHRIS AND OTHO.

CHAPTER I.

THE WINGED HORSE.

ROARING RIVER! Yes, indeed, it is the familiar, mad music of our dear old friend, though something muffled, snow-clad, ice-bound; the ceaseless fugue, ever-ending, ever-beginning; and the deep organ-tone which resoundeth alway.

"Men may come, and men may go,
But I flow on forever,"

sayeth he.

Up at Petrifying Spring the wintry gems are plentiful; the diamond icicles hang like tiny stalactites, glittering from every tree-branch. The silver-fingered ice-god has had his workers out while men slept, and lo! each little stem and leaf is encrusted in sparkling sheen. The tall cedars droop beneath their rainbow-tinted mantles, and every breath of the wind Euroclydon makes tinkling melody among the pendent lustres.

Said Pauline Walsingham, —

"Our orchard is like Aladdin's cavern-garden; for all the trees bear rubies, and emeralds, and precious things."

"He plucked them, and hid them away in his bosom. You also should gather some," replied the lovely mother, Alice Craigenfels, laughing.

"Ah! I cannot do that. I am too warm — they are too cold; but I make them give me pleasure; for I shake the

trees, and wher the rubies and diamonds drop upon the smooth crust, I hear the fairies laughing at me, and ringing their little silver bells. Hark, mamma ! they are at it now. Listen how they tinkle, tinkle ! Ah ! my mamma, you are so charming when you sport with me, — when you bend your head and hearken to hear something, it is as if an angel were whispering secrets to you. The Lady Delight was not half so pretty as you, when she put on the white satin robe she got out of her silken purse, and Prince Almanzor called her ‘peerless water-lily.’ Oh, yes, mamma ! I know why you are so sweet. It is because you love me with your nice eyes. You look, mother, at me. It is good to be your child. I wish Gracie was it too, mamma. Why didn’t you have Gracie and me babies together ? There was plenty of room in my cradle.”

A boyish voice, rough and hearty, and a stamping of heavily-shod feet outside the door, changed Pauline, in the twinkling of an eye, from the dreamy, smiling child lying on her mother’s lap, playing with her golden hair, into an active, wide-awake young animal, all frisk and motion.

“That’s Dick ! He and Gracie and I are going coasting. Ah, my muffler, where has it got to ?” She sprang briskly about, tossing on her hat, battling with her wraps. “Dick’s got him a new pig-sticker, and we are going to make a double-ripper out of *it* and my Pegassus ; but I shall have him by himself some, because Gracie likes him best. *She’s* afraid of double-rippers. You never saw such a scary girl as Gracie is. She’ll get white if a cow looks at her, and she can’t bear the dark. Now my mittens, mamma. Thanks ! Dick calls my sled Peggy ; and he sticks to it that he isn’t spelt with two s’s ; but I know better than he, because Peter had it painted onto him so, and I guess my big brother is a good speller. Who was Pegassus, mamma ?”

"A winged horse, darling. There is a pretty tale about him in the Wonder Book. When you are weary with your frolic, you may come back to me, and we will read it together."

"Oh, yes, mamma! nice, pretty mamma! but — I suppose those Pegassuses don't grow, except in fairy books. Chris had one in her Lady Delight story. My donkeys do me pretty good. Daisy will trot with me and Gracie both. Dick tried to stick on too, but he kept sliding off at the tail. I wish Daisy had been fixed a little bit longer, mamma, so that we could all three ride him. You see, Dandy hee-haws so dreadfully, and groans and sticks out his fore-feet, and stands there stock-still, just whenever he feels like it; not an inch will he budge unless he has got a mind to. Last summer, he stopped right in the middle of the road, and he stayed there so long that Gracie went to sleep; and a man came along in a wagon and told us to get out of the way. And I told him how could I get out if Dandy wouldn't go. And he drove past and left us in the rain, and he laughed at us —"

"Are you coming, with that Peggy of yours, Pauline?" asked Dick, sticking his rougish face into a crack of the door.

"There, mamma! didn't I tell you so!" exclaimed Pauline, in an exasperated voice. "Now tell him that he shan't call him Peggy, and that there *were* winged horses."

"Pho! I shan't believe that story, Aunt Alice, because, you see, it couldn't be; there isn't any place for 'em to grow, and they couldn't manage two wings and four legs. They wouldn't know whether to run or fly."

"Yet, unbelieving Dickon, there was a winged horse in mythology, who did wondrous feats.

"Wondrous feets! Now, Aunt Alice," said Dick, shaking his head, "where is Mythology? There isn't any such place

down in my geography. I never saw it, anyhow ; and I've been clear through Peter Parley and Morse's."

"You come home with Pauline to dinner, and I'll tell you all about it, dear," said the mother, with her gentle voice, full of smiles.

"Yes, Dick ; and we'll bring Gracie too," added Pauline, who rarely left her favorite out of her pleasures. "And you'll cook us some pop-corn balls, wont you, mamma?"

"And nut-stick and taffas," answered Mrs. Bradshaw, making funny round eyes. She was pleased to please her baby-daughter, who, with all her elfin mischief, was so true in her friendships and ardent in her loves. And after the children were gone, she drew her gray shawl close about her frail figure ; and while her fingers were busy with her embroidery (she was working a set of tidies for Zoe), she fell to wondering whether Pauline and Dick would always be such fast friends ; and, woman-like, had a vision of a home with Pauline for mistress and Dick Walsingham for master. It was quite natural that her mind should be busy among weddings, with one so close at hand in her own family, and she said, with a sigh, to her husband, coming briskly in from his market drive, —

"Peter, I hope I shall live to see Pauline a young lady — and married."

"Our Pauline married ! Why, Dainty Pet, how old is the little maid ?"

"It *does* seem a long while in the future, I know ; and that's why I was thinking maybe I mightn't live to see it."

Mr. Bradshaw came and patted the drooping head, every one of whose golden curls were priceless treasures to him, with a tender touch.

"My dear Alice, you know that song that Sabrina sings, — 'We'll sleep together at the foot.' " He stood before the fire

looking down at his wife, with his hands beneath his parted coat-tails. And he felt minded to essay the melody, and began, "W-e-l-l s-l-e-e-p to-g-e-t-h-e-r-r-i," but convincing himself that he had not secured the tune so thoroughly as to give it voice, he left off rumbling among his bass gutturals; and, wetting his lips, he drew in a deep breath and took to whistling. And he succeeded so thoroughly to his satisfaction, that he went through the whole air, including Sabrina's ornamental interlude, topped off with a mellow trill of his own.

"There, Dainty Pet! that's the way we'll do it; but we'll live to see our great-grandchildren first, please God."

She looked at him and smiled. There had been a secret between them once; but after they went together to see poor Fred Goldsmith in his coffin, she mustered up her strength and opened her heart, and he loved her none the less. Only truth and sweet wifely devotion possessed her soul after that; and so light had he made life's burdens for her, so richly surrounded her with tenderness, that her early beauty was still untouched by wrinkles, and not a silver thread had got leave to mingle with her golden hair.

"I'd just as soon my girls shouldn't get married, Alice. I'll give them money enough; they shall be independent; not need to run after the men, nor make eyes at them, nor fish for husbands anyhow. Let me see! Sabrina is sixteen; well, when she's eighteen, I'll settle a nice income upon her, and she may follow out her tastes. She's a good smart girl; she likes farming; she'd run a place now better than half the men. If the women ever vote, she'd drive to the polls in her pony-phaeton, and use her elective franchise for the best candidate; and she'd look so modest, and so womanly strong and secure, that the roughs would take off their hats and keep in their oaths till she was out of sight. Yes, Sabrina's got excellent sense."

"But — I'd rather they'd get good husbands, Peter. It's the truest life and the happiest."

"Thank you, Alice. My life has not been a failure, if you can tell me that after a twenty-two years trial of me."



CHAPTER II.

HOW ZOE SNUBBED PETER.

E feel minded to pay a visit to the Walsinghams. Rather soon, though, after Zoe's return from Rosenbloom; for this is Christmas day, and she is hardly settled and rested from her tiresome journey. But I think she looks as full of merry mischief as ever, and as bright and piquant. Let us see, though, does she.

She is sitting in Sabrina Bradshaw's lap, with one arm around her neck, and their heads so close together that the purple-black tresses mingle with the heavy masses of sun-touched red, which Sam Slaughton called "auburn;" and he meant it, and was ready to prove the truth of his assertion upon the body of any doubter.

Mrs. Walsingham has lain down to rest, after the fatigues of the Christmas-dinner. The Bradshaws, inclusive, had been there; and little Dick and Gracie; and Aunt Elinor was over from Merry Bank; and there had been ox-tail soup, pickerel out of the lake, prairie chickens, venison, and plum-pudding; besides the numberless American pies, which are so good and so indispensable on our sumptuous tables; and there had also been a good deal of talk between the Peters and Aunt Elinor, about Egyptian wheat; and Aunt Elinor produced her *Genesee Farmer*, and Peter brought out his *Rural New Yorker*, and they

couldn't agree; and Peter the younger promulged new facts on the raising of calves with hay-tea, instead of milk, and produced a leathern contrivance, with a rubber ball attached, which included the pleasure of "bunting" in the imbibing process, making it as natural as possible, — a perfect Alma Mater, in fact.

Mrs. Walsingham was never very robust; and widowed so early, that her married life was but a taste — a sip of happiness. Dr. Jenkins tries every year to coax her off to Cuba or Palermo, or some other land of soft breezes, for our rough winter weather tries her sorely; but she draws her crimson wrap closer, and shakes her head. She had one experience of expatriation when Zoe was a wee girleen, and she never could get up courage after, to leave the dear home to which she came a timid bride, and where her woman-power carried her bravely through the test-time when the strength of the strong man failed, and his closing eyes grew dim. His head was on her gentle breast, and his hands clasped hers, when the Death-Angel knocked at the door of his heart. She softly pressed the pale lids upon the soul-mirrors, and shut out the light which had used to gladden her; and she pondered his good words in the lonely night-watches. She was not a spiritualist; but she felt her husband's presence around her; the house was full of memories of him; she is very happy too, — a sunny-tempered, innocent cheerful little creature, all the tendrils of whose heart are turned about and about her young gypsy of a daughter: she is gay in her gayety; she rejoices in her joy.

Miss Elinor has had her bays harnessed and driven up to Craigenfels. Peter *père* and his Alice have taken the children home with them, and the two girls we love have the drawing-room all to themselves, "curtained, closed, and warm." Just the time and place for confidences: so they seemed to think; or at least Zoe did. Sabrina rarely made confidences; she

thought her thoughts, and lived her independent life ; giving much, receiving little.

"Did you know that Peter went down to Ball and Black's before he came up to Rosenbloom?"

"No, indeed ; why didn't he go by way of Bombay for a short-cut ; what took him meandering off there, pray?"

"Well, that! — I suppose." Zoe turned away her head with petulant grace, and thrust out her little hand. "At any rate, he brought it away with him ; how do you like it? I think it is just lovely."

"Beautiful, Zoe, dear, beautiful ! I always did like opals ; but opals and diamonds ! absolutely my admiration , and they suit *you*, for you do opalesce with every passing moment. You are red, fiery — green, jealous — yellow, suspicious — orange, whimsical — violet, associative — and true blue, through all."

"Thank your wisdom. Why not go on with your analysis, and resolve me into my elements?"

"Ah, Zoe darling ! no haste for that ; he who sits the pale horse will accomplish his dread mission all too soon."

" 'So shalt thou in earth,
Dwell full cold,
Dimly and dark.' "

Zoe fidgeted impatiently, as well she might, and withdrew her hand.

"You make me shiver and spoil all the pleasure of my ring. How can you conjure up such a ghastly image to be coupled with it? I'll tell Peter ! Positively, you're like the skeleton at the feast."

"Nay, nay, my pretty Zoe ! Precious soul, never show thy red opalescence, glowing hot and fiery, but bring forth that "hidden hand" and let me see the treasure."

Zoe answered Sabrina's kiss with a smile through her crim-

son pout, and produced, from beneath her apron, a morocco case. She snapped it open, and showed a set of pink coral cut in roses and buds, lying displayed upon their black velvet, — necklace, ear-rings, brooch, bracelets, and all.

“Ah! how many thousand years of toil and death it has taken to perfect those deep-sea beauties!” exclaimed Sabrina.

“Sabrina Bradshaw! what possesses you!” retorted Zoe, shaking her friend’s handsome shoulders. “You are worse than Chris Goldsmith. Come! drop your heroic doldrums and your tiresome learning, and be sensible. I begin to think you don’t like my presents.”

Sabrina laughed, —

“‘The primrose on the river’s brim.
A yellow primrose was to him;
And nothing more.’”

Don’t be vexed, Zoe: the fact is, I’ve been reading “Cosmos,” and I am still rather muddled with it. The everlasting hills feel shaky, and the cooled crust, an uncertain tenure. I do enjoy your *presents* and your *presence*,” — squeezing her; “and, of a truth, I’d no idea our Peter was so skilled in jewels. Let us try them on at once.”

“Oh, dear, no!” Zoe shook positively her little head. “Not with this dress; high-neck,” — touching her smooth throat with her pointed brown finger. “I wanted horribly to wear them at the Rosenbloom party; but you *know* that was impossible. Rose corals with garnet crepe! Barbarous! But come up to my room, and I’ll just slip on an evening dress; I could never bear to spoil the first effect: nothing but black lace or white muslin with these. Tulle over creamy silk *might* do; did you ever see any thing lovelier than this coronet?”

“Never! superb enough for a countess; though I don’t know why a countess should have any thing more superb than you or I.”

Sabrina drew herself up ; and if she had glanced across at the mirror, she might have seen a queenly figure there. "Come," she added, rising hastily, as if the affair was of the last importance, and not a moment to be lost, "let us go at once."

"Stay just one instant first, Sabrina." Zoe stood up, and laid her hand on her friend's arm. "Do you know what that ridiculous Peter wants me to do?"

"Why, yes, I suppose I do."

"What, then? — he declared that he had not spoken to you."

"Why, he wants you to get married to him, and be my little sister ; at least I infer as much from — evidence," replied Sabrina, in some surprise. "You may perhaps remember snubbing me viciously upon one occasion, about 'red-cheeked men,' and I made up my mind, then and there, to keep quiet, till you chose to speak first ; that was when the yellow opalesced in you ; now you glimmer and glow, all blue and violet. He's a noble good fellow, Zoe, as his sister can testify ; quite worthy even of you."

"Oh, yes ! But you've no idea how absurd he can be. For instance : he is begging me to get married right off, now, and not go back to school any more."

"Fie upon my silly brother ! I would not have believed it of him. I must set his folly straightly before him — read him a lecture."

"Oh, no ! you needn't, because I am going to do it — get married, I mean."

"Oh, you are !" answered Sabrina, looking rather blank.

"Yes, I am. And you will have to be bridesmaid ; so there's an end of your school-days for the present, if not forever, you see."

"I don't see that at all. You may marry our Peter if you like, but I shall finish my education at Rosenbloom."

"That's how I talked at Peter ; but he said I had education

enough to keep him in a flurry ; and though he promised, of his own accord, not to hurry me, and wait ever so long if I would only agree to take him at some far-off period in the dim future, here he is, you see, in the greatest pucker imaginable ; no time will do but now ! ”

“ Put him off ; tell him you wont,” suggested Sabrina.

“ Well, I don't know as I ought to do that. Mamma is so delicate ; perhaps it is best for me to remain near her ; and, at any rate, she kissed me and cried ever so much, and thanked me when I told her. I shall have to be married sometime, you know ; so a little sooner or later doesn't matter much. But Peter has got to do *one* thing.”

“ Well, dear, and that is — ? ”

“ He has got to come here and live in our house.”

“ I don't believe Peter Bradshaw will consent to that.”

“ Oh, yes, he will. He says the farm is in a dreadful state ; and the place wants a master. He intends to lease it of mamma, and put it into shape. And he conversed ever so long about drainage, and subsoil plough, and patent hand-rollers, and Alderneys, and Dorkings, and Southdowns, and black Hamburgs.”

“ A pretty mix you make of our Peter's farming talk ! ” exclaimed Sabrina, laughing. “ What a stupid, silly fellow, to pour such heathen Greek into the ears of a couple of fine ladies ! ”

“ Not at all, Miss Bradshaw. He is not a silly fellow. I like it. I don't understand much of it, but it sounds hearty and nice. He shows his teeth while he is talking, and his dimple in the left cheek gets deeper every day ; and it is suggestive (the talk, I mean) of whole barns full of ripe yellow wheat, and orange pumpkins, and ears of corn, and things, and cellars filled with delicious root-a-beggar apples, and Murphy pears, and Winter Nelis potatoes.”

Zoe threw a triumphant glance at Sabrina, after this outburst of enthusiasm ; and she was decidedly put out by her outburst of merry laughter.

" Peter don't laugh at me," pouted she. " I always nod at him in the right places, and say over enough of the long words at the ends of the sentences to show that I'm attending. Mamma gets more puzzled than I, and she don't even try to nod, but pulls on such a helpless face, that I have to go and kiss her directly. You know Uncle Dick always took care of our affairs as long as he lived ; and I daresay Mr. Scraper isn't a very good manager. But Peter will set it all right. He knows all about it."

" 'Oh, the nonsense of the ideal,
With red-checked Peter for the real ! ' "

laughed Sabrina. " But I do know that my big brother holds an opinion with that enthusiastic Genesee farmer who considered it a fatal mistake to describe heaven as a 'city,' when it would be so intensely attractive under figure of a model farm with Yankee improvements."

" I think so too, I'm sure. Isn't our pretty Roaring River much nicer than any city? God made the country ; men make the towns. I don't believe he will ever shut us up behind walls, even though builded of all manner of precious stones."

" Well, Zoe, you have made up your mind to 'change your condition,' as Deacon Proddy says ; and you have it all fixed and settled. I don't see how it ever comes to pass that a girl brings herself to say 'yes,' and merge her individuality into her master's. Poor Hetty Peebles used to hook onto me at school, and bore me with sighing confidences. She said it was heart-breaking to refuse so many, and she was so fond of going over the number of times she had said the 'fatal no,' that Chandy

and Sam always called her the 'fatal no-ist.' Ah ! Zoe, child, can it be possible that all our school-pleasures are over ? ”

“Sabrina, look at me !” flashed out Zoe. “Are you not engaged ? ”

“Engaged ? no indeed !” Sabrina threw back her head.

“Do you love Henrique Zambrano ? ”

“No,” very decidedly.

“Or Chandy ? ”

“I love the naughty boy Chandos ? The handsome play fellow of our childhood ! the promoter of our frolics ! the jester ! the friend of ‘Bill Shakes’ ! the kind, generous, funny, selfish, good-for-naught ‘pretty boy’ ! Yes, to borrow the words of our excellent Deacon Williams, I do, in a manner, as you may say, seemingly, love Sir John ; but prospectively as a lover, and then as a husband — oh, no ! ”

“Well now, be true, Sabrina — Sam Slaughton ? ”

Still “no,” but more faintly, and with rising color in her face.

“I like them all, Zoe ; but as for love — nonsense ! My father’s daughter loves her home, and her ease, and her sweet liberty. Why, Zoe, you and I are only sixteen years old ! ”

“I shall be seventeen next month, dear. Mamma was married at seventeen. She approves of early marriages.”

“Oh, of course it is all right if you like it. I’m sure I shall richly enjoy having you for my sister.”

“Yes, dear, thank you ! The same to you” (bowing).

“Peter says he will take you to Paris with us next year.”

“Oh, will he ! Very kind of Peter, I’m sure,” replied Sabrina, loftily. “I’m not in the habit of being *taken* about. I prefer to make my own plans mostly.”

Zoe laughed, like the elf of mischief she was.

“Very well. You will make your own plans to be my bridesmaid, of course. I shall have Pau’ine for the other, and

my cousin Dickon for second bridesman. I think they will make a gay little couple. And I want our Chris, if I can match her with a mate."

"Would it not be cruel to ask her. We know very well that her mother would not furnish her dresses; and, poor, girl, her heart is too sore to taste any pleasure, even if she gets back health enough.

"I am afraid so, indeed; but we wont despair. Peter intends asking Jan Vedder to stand with you. I rather wanted to have my cousin, Phil Penhurst, from Canadasset, but he says he does not know him, and he should not like to remember our wedding so intimately mixed up with a perfect stranger. And, besides, Phil is going to be married to that pretty Annie Tuftii, and *she* mightn't like to have him stand with you, you know. But if you had only known Phil, Sabrina, he'd just suit you, — 'grand, gloomy, and peculiar,' — and, of course, it would be much nicer and more complete if you had a lover — all in the family, you see. I should enjoy having Chandy and Sam at my wedding, of all things; but there's no knowing when they will come home, and Peter wont hear of waiting. He is getting to put on plenty of airs lately. I shall have to snub him, I'm afraid."

"Well, I like that! Snub one's lord and master elect! A man whom *I* can snub, wont ever suit me!"

"What a pity about Phil Penhurst! You couldn't lay a finger upon his dignity. Such high mightiness! And I know it will be all thrown away on that Annie Tuftii. However, it can't be helped now. And, really and seriously, Sabrina, I don't see how you can go back to school, because you will have to help me select my trousseau. Mamma is such an invalid, I can't have the heart to drag her about among shops; and I intend to make the most of the occasion. One doesn't marry

but once, and I shall thoroughly enjoy choosing pretties. We shall have to make a journey to New York, and, of course, she will go, and we'll take the greatest care of her. And we'll coax your darling, dear little beauty of a yellow-haired mother to come along too, and show them off. Such handsome mammae don't grow on bushes. I like Peter's kinfolk, that's one comfort."

"Thank you, Zoe! And Peter's kinfolk like you; that's a still greater comfort."

"Yes, of course! And we'll stop at the Metropolitan. I love to stay there, it is so close by every thing, and right over Niblo's. And we'll go and see Mr. and Mrs. Florence, and have a good hearty cry over that dear, delightful 'Ticket of Leave Man,' and a laugh with Mrs. St. Evremond, given with a roll. Oh, you must come along, Sabrina; positively you must!"

"When is this important event to be consummated? (as Miss Dulcet says, who is a happy little woman now, by the way).
" 'When shall Hymen light his torch?'"

"The first of April, — All-Fools' Day. Appropriate, isn't it? But there is one thing about it: the fools began with Adam and Eve, and wont end till the last man and woman. Peter had some practical farming reason for wishing it on that day — I forget if it was a cattle-show or a sheep-washing. Oh, I remember now, — there's to be a great Agricultural Convention somewhere, — at Chicago, or Hartford, or — well, never mind the place; at any rate, he wants to include it in our wedding trip."

"That's Peter all over," replied Sabrina, laughing; "beware Zoe, dear, how you make an issue about any thing, or you'll find, to your mortification, that you come in only second best to some brindle bovine, some costly cottswold. You remember the weeping widower, who declared over his wife's coffin,

'I'd as lief lost my best cow, and I believe liefer, than my poor Malvina'?"

"I'm not afraid; Peter always does as I bid him; I have him in good training; he knows I've *got* to have my own way, and I intend always to keep a steady hand over him. The point now in debate is, the absolute necessity for Peter's sister to stop at home till it is all over."

"Three months ahead! I certainly can't afford to lose so much valuable time, Zoe. The classes would be far in advance of me; and I shall graduate with my friends, or not at all. You can go on with the minor details, and you may count on me for the New York trip and the grand finale; luckily, we have vacation in April.

"But, Sabrina," said Zoe, rather ruefully, "I didn't think you would care about going back without me; I'm sure I shall be too lonely without you. Why we have been play-mates ever since we could walk; half the fun of getting married, will be spoilt, if you persist in going off; I think you might do that little for your own Zoe; come now, say you will stay."

"Let us try on the corals, and talk up the dresses," said Sabrina, decidedly. "*La patience est amere, mais son fruit est doux*—one of poor dear Chris's favorite proverbs. I wonder how she is to-day? of a truth she has need of patience; don't talk of lovers to me, while I have her in mind."

"Ah, yes! but my cousin Phil is not Otho Groenveldt, nor are you Christabel."

• "Neither you nor I, Zoe, are for an instant to be compared to her," answered Sabrina, warmly.

"Oh, of course, I'm full willing to admit her superiority, and yet I would not have believed once, that I could ever love her so truly, or permit you to do so either."

"You did glimmer with the green opalescence for a while," said Sabrina, kissing the ripe lips offered to her.

Before the sun went down, rosy-cheeked Peter drove up to the door, with a perfect chime and clangor of bells; seated in the new sleigh, he had just got home from Mansuy's, drawn by his ponies. He threw the reins over their backs; for he had trained them to stand without hitching; and ran into the wide hall, and looked into the empty drawing-room. The great arm-chair, which the two girls had vacated, stood before the rug, and the fire shot out some sparks for greeting; a long clean "early-rose" potatoe, which he had taken from his pocket, as a specimen of his crop, when he came to dinner, lay on the centre-table, among the Christmas gifts. Rainbow Goldsmith (as Pauline was accustomed to call Chris's pussy), was *dos-a-dos* with Zoe's King Charles, a round ball apiece, in the corner. Peter heard voices upstairs, and he turned from the pleasant picture, and called at the foot in a hearty, cheery way, for his betrothed.

Presently the little gypsy appeared on the landing, arrayed in a black evening dress of airy fabric; the rosy corals depending from her ears; caressing her arms; the diadem above her glossy hair, and the necklace rising and falling with every eager breath. She took a flying slide, with her hand on the balusters, and such light patting of her little feet, that she seemed scarcely to touch the stairs; and as swiftly and softly as a wren drops into her nest, she alighted in Peter's strong arms, spread out to receive her.

"Oh, Peter!" exclaimed she, making up a rosy business mouth, "you've forgotten something very important."

"Pumpkins and beans! what is it?" Peter looked anxiously into her glowing face. Tell me quick, so that I can go and do it."

"You never got a watch-chain, to these corals, for dinner toilette, you know, without the necklace! black silk, or grenadine?"

"That's a fact," said Peter, snapping his fingers. "What a stupid woodchuck I am, to be sure! but I'll send right off to-night, and have it up by express."

"Oh, no, don't, Peter, please. It wouldn't be the same at all, as if you chose it yourself."

"No more it wouldn't, either, Zoe, and I'll go in the mid-night train."

Zoe laughed merrily. "You ridiculous Peter! you'll do no such thing. I'd rather wait till we all are there, about the dresses and things; I must buy Sabrina some jewels, at Ball and Black's" (this in a whisper close to his ear, which she pulled down, for convenience), and you and I will steal off some evening, and have a good little time, and a supper at Delmonico's, wont we? I think I shall choose opals, she is so fond of calling me that; and I know, she likes my ring" (kissing it); "don't you tell, will you? And Peter!" (This in a loud voice.) "Of course, you entirely agree with me in thinking that it is clear duty for Sabrina to stay and help me get married, instead of posting off to that stupid Rosenbloom, now don't you, Peter?"

"Well, no, Zoe, I don't. I think she ought to graduate with her class. I'll help you get married; and I should suppose one Bradshaw was enough to dangle after you," said steady-going Peter, in a firm, strong way. "By Jove! how wonderful you are in that dress! you make me think of peaches and cherries, and strawberries and rose-apples, and I don't know what all. I've half a mind to kiss you, Zoe."

Almost before he had finished speaking, she was gone.

"Peter," said she, pouting, and flying up the stairs, "I wont

have any watch chain. You needn't trouble yourself about me."

She did not reach the landing, before Peter caught her up ; for he took three stairs, with his long legs ; and so had the advantage of her.

"Don't, Mr. Bradshaw ! You are crushing my dress, please leave me alone !"

"Zoe, dearest !" I suppose there must have been a dash of reproach mingled with the surprise, in steady Peter's eyes and voice ; for Zoe, though she persisted in pushing him off, colored violently.

"I don't like you any more. You ought to agree with me, and take my part."

"Agree with you, right or wrong, Zoc?" asked Peter, smiling ; "is that my role? Now, I'll be more generous than that ; I only ask you to think my thoughts, when they are on the square, and you know and feel it. You may pull out all the chickweed, and pusley, and keep only the fuschias, and verbenas and those ; I'll not complain. Take your part ! Yes, darling, I will, against the world, — that comes with the vow I am studying every night, before I say my prayers, so as to have it all on my tongue's-end before the day. Let's see how does it go, — 'With all my worldly goods — hum — love, cherish, protect till death.' You see, Zoe, I'm up in the main parts ; I've got all the seeds in ; only I haven't them rolled down yet. It shall be the business of my life, to keep that vow, Zoe — my proudest pleasure."

She stole a glance up into his glistening eyes, and it made her heart beat, they were so steady, and loving ; but her perverse mood impelled her to persist.

"Very well, sir ; then begin now, by saying that Sabrina shall stop at home."

"No, my heart's best darling, Sabrina shall go to school."

"Good-evening, sir ; I wont have any watch-chain, and I wont get married at all ; never in the wide world ! Now, there !"

Sabrina, who had kept wisely out of sight, during this dialogue, and whose proximity was entirely forgotten by the talkers, — Sabrina wondered how her rosy cheeked brother would come out of his fix.

"Zoe, beau.y, don't ! even in jest ; don't say that ! what would life be without you."

"Humph — me ! It seems your own way is the most important thing to your life ; and I'm not in jest ; oh, no, sir ! far from it. I'm in real earnest. This subject is vastly too important for irony ; I've made up my mind to go back to school with Sabrina ; my education needs finishing as much as hers ; and if she ought to go, I ought to ; and I'm going to stay on, ever so many years, till I'm as accomplished as — any thing ! The fact is, I'm disgusted with you, Peter Bradshaw."

She pushed him off and stuck out her lips perversely, and resisted all his efforts to approach her.

After a little, the young man's face changed, the loving light in his eyes clouded over, and he shut his teeth firmly together, and looked steadily at his tantalizing little fiancée, who patted the carpet with her slipper, and shook pettishly her shoulders, looking down sideways.

"Do you mean it, Zoe ?" he said, quietly.

"Yes, I do mean it. You are so poky !" And she looked as if she did mean it, and she thought herself ill-used. So provoking of Peter to stand out against her whims, and look as solid and firm as a rock. "Of course I mean it," she added, as he did not speak, or coax, or protest. "Yes ! and now, what have you got to say about it ?"

"Not much, Zoe ; only if you don't marry me the first day of next April, you never will — that's all." He turned, and walked firmly down the stairs.

Zoe watched him, and her color deepened and paled, and a faint sickness rushed over her. Peter leaving her in anger ! Would he come back ? Would he look at her before he left her ? Only three stairs more ! His thick hair curled close around his head, and his neck looked firm and white as a marble pillar. His fresh, ruddy cheeks ! she could just see their crimson glow, and she knew how his eyes shone — quiet and steady, although they were looking straight before him. His brown, shapely hand moved down the rail as he stepped. Only three stairs more ! If she let him go, she might never get him back. In fact, something told her that she never could. And she loved him dearly. Her heart thumped fast. The last stair, and not a look : he was marching through the hall, his hand was on the door-knob ! She called softly,—

"Peter !"

"What is it, Zoe ?" said he.

"Why are you going so fast ?"

"I've nothing to stop for any more."

"But — Peter — I'm coming."

Down she flew like a feather. And again she landed in his arms outstretched to receive her.

"You are as obstinate as Pauline's donkeys, you old Peter ! And I know quite well that when I begin to give in, there'll be no end of it. You ridiculous fellow !"

Zoe smiled brightly, and looked as sweet and friendly as a shower-washed rose. And really Peter lost nothing of her respect because he had a mind of his own, and manliness to stand fast to his own convictions against her. She acknowledged her

master. Peter received her gladly ; but it was a minute before the cloud cleared off his honest face.

"Did you mean it, Zoe ?" he asked half doubtfully.

"Mean what ?"

"That about going to school."

"Now don't be poky any more, Peter. I've come down to you, haven't I ? I am here. I mean to be married All-Fools' Day, if you like to be the other fool," she replied, smiling and blushing.

"Don't do it again, Zoe ; it hurts."

"I won't if I can help it, Peter ; but you are such a ridiculous fellow ! You put on no end of airs just now, didn't you ? And as to Sabrina, she'll go anyhow, let you say what you may ; so there's no use in our wasting our breath disputing over her, you see."

"Of course she will, darling. She's *setter* than a donkey. And speaking of fools and donkeys, Posey and Whim are at the door, waiting for you to come out and look at them. Suppose you get into something warm, and drive Sabrina home, and then come down to the church and pick me up, and we'll try their paces on the flats. The sleighing is glaze smooth down there."

"Ah ! has my new sleigh come, Peter ? Why didn't you tell me before ?"

"It is at the door, Zoe."

"Oh, dear ! do be quick and show me my turnout !"

She seized his hand, and the two ran down to the door. Peter pulled a fur cloak from the rack as they dashed by, and hurriedly wrapped her in it ; for the keen wind blew tears out of her black eyes which were swimming there. She examined the whole establishment critically ; sleigh, horses, harness, robes, all came in for minute inspection ; while Peter stood proudly by.

"What darling ponies ! Posey and Whim ! Oh, you young villain ! how dared you give them such names ? I must try them directly. Do you believe they will get to know me, Peter, and to love me ? Pretty creatures ! See them look at me !"

"Oh, yes ! I whispered to them, while I was training them, who was to be their mistress. But they didn't know how pretty you were, that is why they study you so. You must feed them sugar. You know quite well how to do that — sugar is nice."

"Come right away into the house, and let me get ready."

In the hall, Zoe stopped and put her hands upon Peter's beaver coat-sleeves, and looked up in his face.

"Peter ! — the truth is, I am very fond of you, because you are just as splendid as you can be and live !"

"Oh, oh !" said Sabrina Bradshaw, to herself, "that is the way you snub our Peter, is it, Miss Zoe ? Well, I think he will probably bear a good deal of that kind of snubbing."

CHAPTER III.

AN OLD FRIEND IN THE FURNACE.

MONTHS had passed now, at this Christmas-time, since Ruth Blair commenced her battle in her lonely home asking counsel or help only from the great Fountain of help. Sorrowfully, and with penitent tears, she lived over the summer. Retracing each wayward step, bitterly bewailing her blindness, and wondering at her perverse folly ; and the shameful wrong she had done her noble husband, by her foolish, mad jealousy ; suffering herself to be played upon by Belle Brandor,

—“a school-girl ! a mere child !” (Heaven keep us from such children !)

Those of our dear readers who went with us through the trials of Christabel, the Widow Goldsmith's daughter, will recall the exploits and schemes of that beautiful blonde whom Chandy named Mopsa Pandora ; and to all such as didn't, we would say in the words of the poet, “Buy me, and I will do you good,” because we are now to follow out the lives of some old acquaintances.

The glamor was removed, the spell broken, and Ruthie could clearly see the drift of the half-suggestions, artful insinuations and skilful manœuvres to secure George Blair's attentions and give them the appearance of devotion, when she knew it would gall. And the wife, “the little bud of a woman !” could have beaten herself for so easily lending her silly soul to the furtherance of such exploits. Her vain longings for a grand house, pretty dresses, and rich furniture ; her foolish ambition for a prominent place in society, in which her good sense had gone to sleep, and all the latent weakness of her nature had struggled to the surface. The small matron had meant to hide, thought were hidden in her own breast, and lo ! her noble husband had read and understood — and pronounced upon her — even her secret weakness, her most carefully concealed follies. Belle Brandon had forced an intimacy upon her. It was none of her seeking ; and yet it had borne such bitter fruits that she was brought to ask herself the question, “Am I weaker in character than that child, that school-girl ! since the strongest should rule ?”

Mrs. George Blair had an inborn love for womanly prettinesses which had never had natural license. Pure-bred ; gentle-folks on both sides ; orphaned at fifteen ; a teacher at sixteen ; and her nineteenth birthday not full-orbed, — she was left alone

with her child. The only man she had ever loved, had left her to work out her life as she could. He was a noble, good fellow too ; and thought he was giving her back her only chance of happiness, — freedom and a divorce !

We are accustomed to expect that marriage will mature the character as by a miracle ; but the tastes and idiosyncrasies are not changed by the utterance of the responses. The habits and desires do not disappear, nor the individuality, when the ring is slipped upon the little, smooth finger. The bishop's blessing may soften for the time the heart of the white-robed girl whom he is launching into her untried life, and bring tears to her eyes ; but that, nor even the first husband-kiss, does not interrupt the current of her sensibilities, nor metamorphose her soul. And there *are* cases on record, where the young *sposo* has kept his money as closely buttoned in his pocket after he had pronounced the vow, "With all my worldly goods I thee endow," as in his bachelor days, and perhaps counted it and hoarded "quite unpleasantly."

Poor Ruth had been a tender little mother and a fond wife till this shadow fell over her. Don't judge her too harshly ; We all make slips sometimes ; we all have to confess to foolish wishes, hours of bitter discontent with our position in life. Many of us think we could gladly shake off our peculiar burdens, and lift some that look lighter among our neighbors. And I fancy there are not many of you, young wives, but could be made jealous as Ruth was, if some beautiful Belle Brandon showed off her eyes and dimples brilliantly and successfully at your George. This last remark is thrown in by way of a flier, of course. I shall not be considered competent to pronounce, without experience or George.

The young blacksmith, could not have told how he became possessed of the idea that Ruth was discontented : it never

dawned on him till this summer ; nor could he have explained to himself where he found out that she loved Otho Groenveldt. He was clear-sighted enough too ; but how can one see a landscape truly when there is a green glass constantly held between him and it ? Did you ever look at the wondrous sight which lies spread out beneath you, when you have gone up that fearful railway, and landed safely in the little tower at the top of old Holyoke ? — wonderful ! gorgeous ! — the yellow fields ; the windings of the red, sandy road ; the pale green pollards ; the sparkling water ; the distant church, and many-tinted town, — but somebody comes along with that glass contrivance, framing in so diverse hues, and thrusts it between you and your joy ; and lo ! the world is all one sickly green ? — only in George Blair's case, the glass to which his kind friend treated him was invisible. He *thought* he saw all things clearly.

Ruth pondered much her friendship for Otho Groenveldt, and found nothing there for which to blame herself. His love for her young friend, Christabel Goldsmith, was so patent to her, that she had no idea it could be hidden from George. Poor earnest George ! who had used to take such pleasure in his inventions ; and to immerse himself in his differential calculus, as in a bath. If the current of their lives had been flowing in its natural channel, she would have discussed it with him ; but there had been no opening of Ruth's heart in that direction for such a dreary time. She thought over the long, confidential talks, in which she had always held the place of adviser, or rather recipient, to her grave friend ; his avowal of his love for her, and repose in her, dating back so long ago, when both were but children, and sworn brother and sister ; never a blush coming at the memory of the one time in their lives when she might have been something dearer, — a swift dream which had fled like the mists of the morning, and

left the kindest friendship behind it. No, that was all clear : not a thought had ever strayed from her noble giant. Even in her ambitious dreams, he had been Lord Paramount.

She worked at the tangled skein ; and though many things pointed toward Belle Brandon, as the author of a certain heliotrope-scented letter, which George had left upon his desk the night of her great trouble (when she had spoken bitter words to her husband, and shut herself into her room, and had come forth a lonely, desolate woman), and which she kept safely, and pondered much. She had nothing tangible to fix on ; and could not afford her wily enemy the triumph of upbraiding her, or even disclosing to any the secret of her misery. She fastened upon the painful certainty, that she had forgotten God, dropped her religion out of her thoughts ; her trust was gone ; she had cut loose from safe moorings, and was drifting — drifting. She prayed for a sight of the Friend's face in the gloom, for a touch of his blessed hand ; she cast her griefs and sins at his feet, and took up her trial. She schooled herself to bide her time, and make no sign ; she might have tried to trace George, but for the one sentence in his letter which she found upon the desk, "I do not think I wish ever to see you again," that held her hand when she tried to write, and compelled her to silence ; but the wicked, vindictive bitterness, possessed her soul no longer, and, despite those cruel words, she carried the letter in her bosom, and bathed it often with her tears.

There had been a famous sewing-society in Roaring River, in which little Ruth was a zealous worker, and from which she had expected great good. But it collapsed after the grand explosion of a Fair. The pleasant excitements and social gatherings were ended, and the funds appropriated : she could have smiled, if her smiles had not been all frozen, when she learned

how. First, to purchase a costly Bible and psalm-book for the pulpit (it was rumored that Rev. Dr. Perfect had made scathing comments upon the shabbiness of the old ones, when he exchanged with Mr. Growing); second, to constitute Mrs. Deacon Williams, and Mrs. Esquire Hitchcock, life-members of the Tract Society; leaving a balance unaccounted for, which, it leaked out, had been bestowed upon Belle Brandon, in reward for the active share she had taken in the Fair; which was so far true, that a vote had been carried in a small gathering of the sisters, from which Mrs. Goldsmith and Dulcet Pettibone were carefully excluded, to present the lovely blonde with an appropriate offering. But the kind design got somewhat warped, for Deacon Williams laid hands on the money, to pay for a certain invisible green habit in which Miss Brandon had shone resplendent up at Craigenfels, on the occasion of the great horseback excursion; and it was a sort of pity too, for she had been minded to invest the money—which she considered fairly earned, and had “laid pipe” to get—in jeweler’s wares; and gauds and ornaments—so they were rich and costly—were dear and pleasant to her soul.

The nine-days wonder which George Blair’s disappearance from Roaring River had caused, and for which all manner of reasons were assigned, subsided at length; the stand-up tussle over the new church edifice taking off the attention of the people, and affording no end of opportunities for personal encounters, wordy battles, and hard names, in which the sisters freely joined without the ceremony of inquiring whether or no it were a free fight.

• Old Miss Pettingill, the tailoress, who lived down on the flats, and Mrs. Esquire Hitchcock, wagged their tongues over George’s conduct, and tried hard to get up a report, which Mrs. Deacon Williams indorsed, connecting his sudden disap-

pearance with Belle Brandon's going ; but that was so palpably untrue, that it died without a gasp ; and Adeliza Euphemia said " she'd always known that that 'ere Blair had another family down South, and probable he'd gone to visit 'em," — adding, " You needn't mention it from me, but I heerd on't from good authority ; such folks makes me drefful sick of gettin' married. Don't they yeau ? Oh, forlornity ! "

The gifted Adeliza also paid a visit of condolence and espial to the Horseshoe, without great results. She found Ruth quiet and collected, and ready to parry all their inquiries with civil indirection, — little Ruth, who never took anybody into her confidence. There was one true young heart, though, to whom love gave clairvoyance to understand her grief without the need of words.

She soon settled upon her course : the school was opened to her. The teacher had got married ; Miss Dulcet Pettibone had become the wife of a Gonecusset Captain Slocum, and was keeping house, with vast enjoyment of the change in her condition. Therefore Ruth fitted her parlor (where she had been so happy, and where her mother's Pleyel stood close to a wonderful barrel-chair) with desks and benches, and bought a globe, and a jug of ink, and some maps, and then set to work to drum up her pupils ; but she put the barrel-chain out of sight first. George helped her to make it, and he whistled her cradle-song while he was working ; and sung it all through ever so many times.

"The cricket sings under the hearth,
The bird is asleep on the tree,
The owl comes out, and stares about
Some poor little mouse to see.
But my baby lies snug and close,
His curly pate on my arm,
And his cunning little dimpled toes,
Stuck out to the fire to warm."

She opened the piano, and played the melody, and sang it through: you could scarcely have heard her, though in the next room, so choked was her voice with sobs; and she knelt before that chair, and asked for strength, often and often, in the silent garret, alone with God and her trouble; and she got it, and lived on it, and courage which sustained her. She canvassed for scholars, coming home after each task, pale and sad, but firm to struggle and to endure.

Pauline Bradshaw, Dick Walsingham, and Gracie Jenkins were among the first pupils; and Irene Bisbee brought her little sister; and Mary McCross got the Proddy twins; and Payson Williams begged hard to be allowed to go. The boys bumped him, and tore his cap, and knuckled him, he said, down to the "school-house;" but his mother said "deestric teachin'" was good enough for her "young ones;" and so he played hookey and robbed bird's-nests, and stole apples as his brother Bax had done before him; and he also was beaten with many stripes.

The parlor was soon filled, and Ruth plunged into her labor with the zeal which works against memory and drowns thought; and her pupils had a happy time of it, and grew daily in grace and wisdom.

George Blair left money in the Phoenix Bank, in Toptown. He told Ruth about it, and that it was for her. But she couldn't touch it. She'd have starved first! She would not abandon *his* home. Where he left her, she would remain. If he wished to seek her, he should find her at her post; and she could not keep down the hope that he *would* return to her. Such a delusion could not last forever, and he would come to his senses, and find how he had been deceived (so she kept saying to herself). And her heart jumped when a shadow passed the window, or a step sounded on the walk sometimes; so that she had to press it with her trembling hands and gasp

for breath. Then, the horrid dread that he wished to relieve her false, tried to creep in and chill her soul. But after every perusal of his last letter she drove it out, and believed triumphantly in his great truth and goodness.

At any rate, her duty was plain. She must live on, faithful over a few things; and try to be patient and to be useful. And she bridged over the dismal present, which she accepted as a time of penance and trial and labor, with hopes of reunited happiness—hopes which a less elastic nature might have felt no ground for. And she had hours when her eyes filled with rare light, and her face cleared and glowed; and she gave herself up to the joy of dreaming of her absent husband. His mathematical books and instruments were very full of him, and she studied hard, in her leisure; often laying down the volume to recall his looks, or burying her face among its leaves, the faint odor of the sandal and cinamon woods he was fond of using, and which he kept in his chest among his books and instruments, reminded her of him. She remembered how he had tossed up his curls and frowned, and how the abstracted scowl had dissolved into a kindly smile, when she had come and dropped a little kiss upon his cheek. Among all her memories, (and it seemed that she had power to take up every link of her life since her first meeting with the young blacksmith, that wild, autumn afternoon, when the wind-storm had turned her umbrella wrong side out; and he, passing by and seeing her futile struggles with the inverted parapluc, had stopped and helped her master the enemy so raging with the “depravity of inanimate things,” and afterwards attended her to her boarding-place), among all her memories of him, nothing of meanness, selfishness, cunning, or unkindness came to the surface. Every act of his was fine, noble, dear, beautiful! Every look honest, clear manliness, and most tender love.

Ruthie soon had a helper she had not expected. It happened on this wise: There was a young Irish lassie, named Sonsie Eagan, in whom Ruth took a lively interest, and who was a diligent and faithful learner of all kitchen-lore which the thrifty housewife, Mrs. Deacon Williams, could impart by precept and example. And besides this, the girl having one of those restless intellects which must push on, she picked up crumbs of all sorts of knowledge, coaxed or surprised out of the rest of the household. The Deaconess was forced to confess that Sonsie was a "likely, capable girl," and would have been sorry to part with her. But she dodged or put aside all talk of wages, and gave her faithful maid just as few garments as she could. Mrs. Eagan knew what starving and deep trouble was; but she was getting a decent living now, and she grumbled, and told Souse to "lave it, and niver put another day into it." But the girl laughed, and refused with some of her rich, racy Irish fun, and stuck at her post undaunted by hardship or abuse.

"I'll learn all t'auld dragon can tache me, mother, before I lave her;" said she, "and when I'm ready, I'll find me a service aisy enough. I must be perfect fust, though; and she's the tidiest, clanest body, wid her gret fist, that you iver met wid. She just takes hold of her work by the handle. It's a real pleasue to see her turn it off, as perfect as beads; though we might get dumb in her service, for 'tis ne'er a lilt nor a jig that she'll have piped up in her kitchen if she can help it, no mather how warm the merry sun shines above, nor the light hearts dance inside of us. But don't you fret, mother. I'll get a service among the Roaring Rivers, one fine day. I've had enough of the Gonecussets; they're mostly of the one stripe, barrin' Captin Slocum and Mr. Bisbee, and the best of the others is just a dose for a grown person."

On the morning of the departure of the young scholars for

Rosenbloom (that was in early autumn, you know), after seeing the last of Chris, and watching the puffing engine round the bend, Sousie made haste to keep a promise she had given "her white angel," to find a home for the great pussy, Rainbow, whom Chris dearly loved. So she went up to the widow's and coaxed the deft Egyptian with nuts and raisins, of which he was extravagantly fond; and taking him in her arms, she set off at a good brisk pace on her two-mile walk. He lay in her embrace, with his great, double fore-paws dangling, his mottled tail switching, and his yellow eyes winking and blinking in the sunshine. And he uttered short, little "permous," like barks, occasionally, as his sharp, pointed ears caught a rustle among the leaves; luxuriously enjoying the ramble till they got into Long Meadow; when he either "smelled a mice" or got sight of a wood-pigeon, or a chipmunk. At all events, he refused to be carried any more, though he raced at Sonsie's side gleefully when she made top-speed, and followed, like a dog, when she fell into a breathless walk, holding her sides and laughing at the fun it was. And he dived into all the bushes, lapped water out of the running brooks, and tried his claws on the great tree-trunks.

Old Miss Pettingill welcomed him joyfully; being, as she declared, "clean out of cats;" and she ambled off into the buttery, and brought out a pat of butter and greased his double paws.

"There!" exclaimed she, sitting down in her low rocking-chair, with her case-knife in her hand, and gazing at him blandly through her silver-rimmed spectacles, — "there! I expect that'll wont the creater good. It's the sov'reignest thing! because, you see, they've got to lick, to clean the grease off; and it takes up their minds, so that by the time they've done lickin' they feel to hum."

"I think Rainbow feels at home anywheres mostly," said Sonsie, laughing.

"Law, yes! he does seem to, and he's as fat as a pig too, I declare, for't. The widder is a dreadful savin' critter, but 'taint likely she'd grudge nothin' to her only darter."

As sharp Sonsie had no fancy for being pumped, she opened her blue eyes wide at the ancient tailoress's feeler, and only replied, -

"What a long tail our cat's got!"

Old Miss Petingill laughed.

"The idea!" said she. "You're cute, aint you? 'Tis kinder long, aint it? He's a drefful handsome cat! Come here, Tommy!"

Rainbow, having polished off his paws, partook relishingly of the viands offered him, lapped all the milk out of the blue "sercer," washed his nose, and then set himself to explore; smelling at the orifices which suggested mice, running down cellar, diving behind the pork-barrel, and coming forth embroidered with cobwebs; racing upstairs and resting, for the space of a couple of minutes or so, on the spinster's maiden couch; which was pounded up as high and round as well-punished geese feathers could be, and covered by a Turkey red and white sunflower bed-quilt. Then he examined the pig-pen; uttering his sharp "permous," — short barks of greeting in answer to the grunts of the two white porkers who were to buy their owner a "winter-rig" when they should "shuffle off this mortal coil." And he took a roll in the bed of catnip, and a nibble at it. Then he dug out a couple of meadow moles, and tasted the tender bits. And so, having exhausted the resources of the maiden's establishment, he went back to look for Sonsie; and finding her not, he made a bee-line for Brookside, where he arrived about an hour before sundown, as fresh as new.

During the first weeks of Christabel's absence, he scught her daily in all her accustomed haunts ; but having considered the subject carefully, with his eyes shut, and his paws tucked under him, he made up his mind she was really gone, and not coming back any more ; and after that he cut loose from the premises. He pondered over his favorite duckling a good while, and had half a mind to eat him up out of harm's way ; but it was only a passing temptation ; the best of cats are liable to such ; and ducky lived on to flash the sunshine from her green feathers and dip her polished bill into the brook ; and in due time to hatch out a pretty brood of muscovies of her own.

Rainbow never asked any thing of anybody, but he looked as sleek and comfortable, and as "up to snuff" as ever. When Sonsie got a bit of a holiday, she spent it in his company ; and though she read and studied all the while, he was no ways put out ; evidently looking upon such a course as legitimate and proper, and just what his mistress would have done in like circumstances.

CHAPTER IV.

SONSIE GOES NUTTING, AND HAS AN ADVENTURE.

 HERE had been a hoar-frost the night before, and the chesnut-burrs were open, and the boys and girls were out amongst the trees poking away the brown leaves and gathering the great, shining nuts into their baskets. Sonsie saw them go by the Deacon's, when she was sweeping the sidewalk, and she heaved a natural sigh that she was so shut out from all childish enjoyments.

"I'm going a nutting this blessed afternoon !" said she to

Nora, the new cook, as she dumped her splint broom behind the kitchen door.

"Nary a nut, me girleen!" spoke back Nora. "The auld dragon'll sing ye another song to that, if ye pitch yer tune in yer hearin'."

"I'm going a nutting," repeated Sonsie, resolutely. "The blessed sunshine is for me as well as them girls. And I'll be prancin' up a good time this evenin', anyhow!"

"Ah, wisha! but the red roses and the flax-flowers that we used to be gittin' those times to home — tsit, tsit! — ochone!" said Nora, wiping her hot face, and trying her iron against it.

Sousie had been upon her feet ever since day-dawn, scrubbing and cleaning, and had worked faithfully through all her tasks; and "filled in the chinks of her time," as she was ordered to be sure and do, with the carpet-rags, which the Deaconess kept on hand for that purpose. After the dinner-dishes were washed, and rinsed, and drained, and wiped, and polished, and the dish-cloths were scalded and dried and folded, and the last one of her many duties done, she presented herself, and boldly made her request. Her mistress evinced only disgust; but Sonsie threw in some hints about the chamber-maid's place at the Millville House, to be hers for the asking (a string she had clanged too often in the dame's ears of late, as she knew very well she could not have such a girl as Sonsie for the price of half a dozen chamber-maids), she, with the sourest of visages, gave her an hour's leave.

"An hour to go to Bradshaw's woods and back again!" said Sonsie, walking away. "I'll be back when I come, and that'll be when I've me fun all out and me basket full of nuts; and time enough too for the hard-hearted old dragon. A day's work is tin hours, and I've put in fourteen already, rinin' the futs off me entirely!"

Dressed as tidily as she could be in her bits of duds, she swung her basket onto her arm, and threw a merry jil e back to Nora (whose thoughts were still lingering in the green pastures of "the place to home"), as she walked away. The golden and scarlet maple leaves fluttered down before her, and she paused now and then and picked up the finest, discarding and replacing as more gorgeous specimens attracted her color-loving eyes. And sitting down on a log, she wove them deftly together and garlanded them around the straw hat she wore (it was a cast-off of the Deacon's, which she had cut down and trimmed with bands of her own plaiting); and she stood up and gazed down at the image the round pond showed her — she standing on its brink inside the margin of brown leaves, and gazing into its depths, black and still — and she winked knowingly at the eyes which laughed up at her.

"'Tis a pair of round cheeks that ye have, hinney, anyhow," said she, "thanks to the Deacon's good praties!"

She searched and called for Rainbow, but he would not come; and she felt as though half her pleasure was lost in his absence. In the edge of the chestnut wood, she saw a column of blue smoke shooting straight up into the sky, and then floating away to mingle with the mists on the mountain, and she made another loitering pause to watch it. As she did so, she heard an odd scratching and pawing among the dried leaves, and the heavy switch of a lithe whip, followed by shouting, whœzy laughter. Though her heart beat quick, it was not because her stout Irish courage failed her.

"Au-ough! there's divelment beyond that gret knowe," said she. "I must be hurryin'." And she bent to the hill and climbed fleetly and swift, as a hare runs to earth. Her flying feet cleared the low fence dividing the meadow from the woodlot, and carried her around the old gray rock, which rose like a

tower right before her, and there she stopped a moment, motionless.

Bax Williams sat on the ground, hugging his knees, and see sawing back and forth in ecstatic delight before an old stump, in the hollow of which he had kindled a fire.

There was some object between him and that, which he stopped now and then to contemplate in savage glee; and Sonsie held her breath while he picked a willow off a pile of cuttings beside him, and struck a couple of sharp blows; which were followed by a fearful cry of pain, and a struggle for life among the withered leaves. The blood swept through the veins of the young Irish girl. She knew, without looking, what it meant; and she leaped on with a swift bound. Poor Rainbow, fallen into the power of his enemy at last! his fore-paws were caught fast in a double steel-trap, and he crouched on the ground helpless, suffering, and at the mercy of his savage tormentor, from whose composition "bowels of compassion" had been entirely left out, and the rapidly kindling stump only a little way off, around which the forked flames were already creeping in frightful haste. The poor dumb creature must have been in torture for a long time; because his mouth was covered with foam, and there was quite a little pool of blood around the trap, which was firmly secured to the ground.

"Au-ough! murther! murther!" It was an eldritch screech with which Sonsie sprang upon Bax. She clutched his sandy crop in her firm, strong, little fist.

"This is the way ye'r playin' hookey, an' yer mother thinks ye'r gittin' stuffed wid idication! Au! ye limb of Satan! Ye long, sprathilin gomersal! take that! and that! and that!" She dropped a blow upon his ears with every word, and shook his head about till his eyes rolled up like a dying gosling's.

Bax was taken aback by the suddenness and fierceness of

her attentions, and being an arrant coward as well as bully, he was at first too much terrified to think of defending himself; but he managed to struggle to his feet and get loose, and his scrubby hair stood out like an ill-used besom with Sonsie's unexpected manipulations. All the savage brute in the boy raged as he backed away a step or two, pulled down his jacket, and puffed and blowed, and glared at the girl, whose eyes blazed and deepened with indignation.

"I'd like to strangle you!" said she, fiercely. "Come, hasten and put yer nasty paws to a decent service, and let out me cat from that, before I scratch the two tiger eyes out of ye!" and Sonsie made up her fists and sprang on, as if she longed to begin.

"Just the one I wanted to have come up to my jolly show!" Bax kept out of her reach; backing away, and picking up a big willow. "You've took a front seat to the performance just in the nick of time. Dear Rainbow is making his debut. His piece wont last him nigh so long as we could wish, on account of his havin' only nine lives. Lord! I wish for his sake, and yourn, Miss Eagan, — ma's dish-washer, that was a beggar and a street-sweeper, — that he'd got a thousand; and I'd give a dollar if that Christabel Goldsmith was here this minute!"

He gave Sonsie's basket a wicked kick which sent it spinning behind the log.

"Leave yer brattle, and let out the poor cat! You've no feelin's at all, barrin' bad ones. I'll set all the Paddies in the factory at ye to-morrow if ye don't start lively. I'll whisper to Butcher, and Long-tail-Blue, and Kind Duck, and they'll buff your haffets more harder nor I did!"

"Hold yer tongue, beggar! I tell you I'm goin' to let the dear creature out afore he keels up; because dead cat-skins aint good for nothin'. But he'll live a good while without any

skin. He wont catch cold, neither ; cause, you see, we've got a good fire. I'd a cut off his tail, only I want to sell his plaguy old hide. The holes he is makin' in his paws, cu'tin' round so, wont hurt' em none. You needn't make no fuss ; Miss Goldsmith said hout I might kill the varmint. 'Taint nothin' to you, nohow. But I'm sorry I can't give you a programme. There wasn't time to get 'em up ; bein' 'bout 'lection time."

Sonsie was not squeamish, but she turned deathly sick. She feared it was all over with poor Rainbow, — his merry antics and wild pranks, and his roving, free life. He lay quite still, with shut eyes. She put her hands to her mouth and screamed. The gray rock threw back her voice ; and Bax, who hushed his jeering talk, with scared face, half expecting Butcher and Kind Duck to appear, laughed and wheezed when the echo died and he saw Sonsie's face of despair.

"You see hollerin' wont do a mite of good ; me and you and Rainbow has got the woods all to ourselves this afternoon, quite *select*. When I've licked him all I want to, I'll let you see how neat I can peel him. It's time to touch him up now, he's dozin' off ; you shall see him frisk ; I e'ena'most split myself laffin' at him."

Sonsie had been gazing at the trap, while Bax, grinned and ulked, and she darted forward, essaying to spring it herself.

"You tech that ar' trap, if you dare ! I'll give you such a lakin' as you never got yet ; stand off, ye sneakin' tramp, ye !"

She paid no heed to his threats, but stooped and pushed her finger upon the spring, but it resisted her endeavors. Bax watched her an instant, and rushed upon her and struck a stinging blow, which fell smartly across her shoulders ; protected only by her faded old gingham, but she did not give up ; again he plied his willow, bringing both hands to bear, and

clenching his teeth : she shuddered and put all her strength to her work.

"By golly, I'll kill you ! I'd liefer than not," snarled Bax ; and dropping the whip, he took to his fists, raining blows on her head ; and Sousie got dizzy, and fell forward, pale and motionless over her half-dead favorite, wetting her hands and garments in his blood.

Jan Vedder came crashing through the bushes, his game-bag on his back, and a cocker spaniel at his heels ; and afar off from the dim woods, came the deep bark of Flirt, the great sheep-dog, who was following their trail. Jan darted upon Bax, who had stopped dead still, regarding the prostrate girl, with his fists clenched, and his teeth grinding together ; but with a coward's fear stealing into his savage eyes, and curdling in his blood.

Seizing him by the nape of the neck, he swung him about, and dashed him down with his bullet-head in fearful proximity to the burning stump ; then strided over him, and stooped to raise the Irish girl, who staggered to her feet, and gazed in bewilderment around her, striving to collect her thoughts.

"You young devil, you've nearly murdered the girl. I never heard such a screech as she gave ; and what's this ? — blood ! Where's your wound, poor child ?"

Unconsciously Sonsie glanced from her reeking hands to the trap, and Jan exclaimed, "What the deuce have we here, eh ! Ill-begotten brute, this is your game ; no wonder your sister screamed."

He pulled open the terrible steel-jaws. "There, poor wretch ! go — if you've life enough left in you ; now let me help you, my little girl."

Sonsie, still bewildered with the blows she had got, shook her head, though she heard and saw as in a dream. She stooped

instinctively and picked up her wounded pet, and sinking down upon a log she began to cry over and kiss him, while he lay passive, with half-shut eyes. Jan looked at her a moment, and his indignation mastered him; he wheeled about upon Bax, who still crouched and glowered, and seizing him by the collar, he dragged him to his feet.

"I'll teach you to beat your sister, you cowardly whelp!" said he; and picking up a stout willow from the pile so carefully selected, and intended for poor Rainbow, he laid it upon his tormentor with a vigorous play of muscle worthy of a boat-swain's mate. The first few strokes, were borne in sullen silence; the next brought out a shower of curses and foul language, and then came abject prayers for mercy.

"Oh, dear! he's killing me, Sonsie; he's killing me! speak to him; call him off; oh, dear, oh-oo!"

"There, leave that! Mr. Vedder!" spoke up Sonsie, whom the scene had thoroughly brought back to consciousness, though her face was pale yet, and her teeth were set. "Stop sir! don't be lettin' yourself down to the level of that young cub of his mother! Holy St. Patrick! what divils the best of these trowsers hawrels are, to be sure!"

Whether Jan Vedder heard her voice or no, he stopped, and threw the writhing boy off, as he would have done a crawling reptile, and sent the stump of the willow after him.

"There!" said he, panting, "I reckon you've got about the best dusting you ever had in your life; and I advise you to skeddadle before my arm gets rested, or you'll very likely fall heir to the balance of the willows."

Bax picked up his cap, jammed it down over his ears, and set off on a jog trot, cursing and snuffing; when he had crossed the fence, and got so far as to feel safe, he turned and shook his fist.

"You drunken Vedder. I'll serve you out for this, before I die, as sure as eggs. You wait till I get big as you, old raw-bones! then you look out; it'll be my turn then."

"There, by-by! better wash your face, the first pond you come to; and be very careful how you beat your sister, or you'll go from the jail to the gallows with murder on your soul, some of these days."

"My sister! that Irish tramp my sister! You'll find out who you've been poundin'. My father'll just put you through the law without any mittens. That's so!"

As Bax stood still in his tracks, cursing and swearing, and making horrible faces, pulling down his eyes, and sticking out his tongue; and persisted in his course of conduct, paying no heed to Jan's words, that young gentleman started after him in a long, loping run; but before he reached the fence, the horrid little monster's courage trickled out at his fingers'-ends, and he took himself off at his best pace, and Jan came leisurely back again.

"Has he hurt you much, my dear?" he asked, taking off his soft hat and mopping his hot face, as he stood before Sonsie, and looked kindly down at her and Rainbow.

"No, sir; I was a bit dazed; but I'm all right now; I'm fearin' that he'll die, though" (patting the cat softly); "his futs is hurted dreadful."

Jan examined the wounded paws, with tender care.

"This wont kill your pet, my girl: he's good for no end of rats and mice, if he has no injuries beside. I wish I had a bit of old linen, I'd dress his wounds for him."

"Take me hankercher, sir: 'tis just that, and no more," said Sonsie holding to view a clean tatter, and drawing up her mouth corners into a comical smile, through her grief.

"That's a fact," replied Jan, laughing, "a fair specimen of

ventilation, a holy relic." He took it and bound up the mangled paws, and Rainbow seemed to understand well that he was helping him; for he offered no resistance, and licked Sonsie's hand during the operation.

"You set great store by your pussy, don't you?" remarked Jan, in reply to Sonsie's thanks.

"Indade, but I do then, sir; he's a broth of a cat hisself; but I love him most for the sake of Miss Chris; she sort o' left him to me care, and she goin' to school. 'Tis the white angel to me intirely that the pretty lady is, from the first night I ever sit eyes on her holding a loaf of white bread in her two little hands, and smilin' into me eyes. Ah, sure, Mr. Vedder, I'd fall down and adore her, just if she bid me. Yes, Rainbow's her cat, and he knows more nor half the men."

"Miss Chris?" said Jan, ignoring the doubtful ending of Sonsie's speech. "That should be Christabel Goldsmith; the sour widow's fair daughter; the marvellous musician, scholar, poet; the famous horsewoman. She and I rode a gay race once."

"The same! sure, sir; there can be but one Miss Chris in the world; any more than there'd shine on us two moons in the blue night-sky."

"And pray, who are you, my dear," said Jan, in a puzzle.

"Sonsie Eagan is the first letters of me name, at your service, sir; you'll excruege me risin' up, seein' as me lap is full of Rainbow.

Assured of the safety of her pet, the mercurial spirits of the warm-hearted Irish lassie mounted apace; and her eyes shone, and danced, and her lips smiled upon the astonished young hunter, who looked well at her, which he had scarcely done before. There was nothing attractive in her faded old garments, or stout cowhide brogans; but scanning those lightly he found somewhat agreeable in her laughing, saucy face; raised

boldly to his, but yet with absolute chaste modesty. She had grown a head taller in the half year, which had passed since Ruth Blair found her sitting in the straw, and half-starved, at the old red school-house, and though her purple-black hair was cropped, it lay in heavy masses about her head ; and her deep blue eyes (real Irish eyes) looked at him mischievously from beneath her arched black brows ; her skin was fine and clear as it could be and milky white ; and her wholesome cheeks had the rich red of the damask rose, with lips to match ; and her figure firm, supple, well-rounded, and as straight as an arrow.

"Ah ! you are a wide-awake lassie ; and you can be very merry, I know. You might be a gay partner for a reel ; and that arm of yours would pull a firm oar. I am very lucky to meet you up here, particularly as you needed assistance ; and if you will tell me where you belong, I'll see you safe home ; for your enemy, who declines the honor of brotherhood, though he might be proud to acknowledge the relationship (I'm sure I should be), may be lurking in wait for you somewhere."

"He's safe off by this time, sir ; and 'twould be small loss if he niver showed his face again among decent folks. I should dool to call such a speckled loon my brother. I'm a true Irish lassie, wid niver a drop of Yankee blood in me clane veins at all. It was the Deacon's spalpeen of a boy who you trated to the batin'. He told ye he'd pay ye off for it ; and though the loon says every thing but his prayers, he's the one for callin' round and payin' off. If ye've any horse or dog that ye set by, ye'll take good care of 'em. Sure he's the nasty crawlin' snake for bitin' !"

"The Deacon's son !" said Jan, laughing. "Well, the worthy papa, whoever he may be, can't shirk the doctrine of total depravity, when he looks in the face of his offspring. I could not have called him kin to you, my dear, if I had stopped to study

your face ; forgive me the blundering insult to your 'cleas Irish blood,' and let me take care of you home."

"Thank you, sir ; I don't need any particular care. I'm able to take my own part, pretty much ; but I'm obliged to you, all the same. I'm thinkin' I'll just go to Miss Ruthie this evenin. I'd rather not face the ould dragon. I've a dozen of ridges al ready around my shoulders ; and 'tis me belief she'd cross them wid plenty of the same stripe, along of that dirty blackguard, and I'd always be havin' to keep him in order, leastways, 'tis as well to go home no more."

"By the old dragon, you mean your respected mother, I suppose?" said Jan, laughing.

"You're wrong there, sir. I hope I'm better bred than to be callin' me mother names ; and if I was to spake at all of her to a stranger, I'd liken her the pretty flax-flower, or the quiet snow-drop that grows aneath the hedges. It is me big mistress, the Deacon's wife, that I'm speakin' of ; and she's all that and more. I know you quite well, Mr. Vedder ; I've opened the door to ye often and often, when ye used to come courtin' to Miss Belle, those times I lived with Mrs. Williams.

"Oh, the deuce you have !" replied Jan, coloring up.

"Yes, indeed, sir," answered Sonsie, enjoying his confusion ; "and I always took a smell at the bookays ye sent up ; and I helped Miss Belle to dress for all the drives ye used to be takin' her, when ye come up in the phetton wid them bonnie red horses."

"Let me carry pussy for you," interrupted Jan, who seemed to find little pleasure in these reminiscences "You should have enough to do to carry yourself, after your little scene. I hope you don't intend to make love in the same fierce fashion."

"I don't know sir, I'm sure ; I haven't tried that yet ; I shall, soon as I get a good chance. I must have sweethearts first.

I've kept meself alive to catch Miss Belle's pretty ways: she's a good one at it."

Jan sat down on the log, and heaved a deep sigh. Sorsie started back and put her hand before her nose, with a disgusted grimace.

"What's in the wind now, my Irish beauty!" exclaimed Jan, looking up and meeting, with surprise, her disdainful face.

"Pah! you've been drinking, sir," spoke up Sorsie, boldly and fearlessly.

Jan curiously surveyed her modest eyes, which looked full in to his; her screwed-up lips, ripe and provoking, and her white neck, and her round, fresh-colored arm, and the little firm, well-shapen hand, she held up so meaningly; and pretty soon he answered, —

"Well, and what if I have?"

"I wouldn't do it, sir, if I were Mr. Vedder — a born gentleman! A drunkard is a nasty beast, not fit to touch or look at. I'd never in the world be it."

"Let housewives make a skillet of my brain," said Jan, musingly, "if this is not a queer way to accost a gentleman; but she's more than half right, I'm afraid. Still, she's wrong too; for I'm no drunkard; at least, not yet."

"Your face is awful red, sir."

"My face!" exclaimed Jan, passing his hand up and down his cheek, and looking sideways at Sorsie. "That is the sun and wind, my girl."

She shook her head and pursed up incredulous lips.

"Tis *whisky*; and, by the same token, yer head, which should be the servant of your will, is shaking, and yer eyes are heavy."

"Everybody can't have eyes as bright as yours, Sorsie, which, upon my honor, are uncommonly fine and agreeable, even when they shoot such strange glances at a poor fellow. But come

now, I'll tell you something. You're so ready at speaking your mind and giving advice, you may give me a little more. What would you do, if you had a trouble you couldn't get rid of? I've tried hunting, and I've tried fishing; but, 'tis no go."

"What is your trouble, that ye take the liquor to be rid of, sir, if you wouldn't mind naming it to me?" questioned Sonsie, with the true Irish mingling of wild freedom and sweet tenderness in her clear tones, and her bold, modest air. "And you such a brave well-fashioned gentleman!"

"I'm in love, child." Jan looked into his soft hat, and carefully spelled out the "Nobby" in the blue silk crown-lining. "Head over ears in love; and I think — indeed I'm sure — the gay lady doesn't care a rush for me."

"You may take an oath of it on the old Gatlad-of-Howth; and that's the four gospels they found in the isle of Ireland's eye; that's so sacred that nobody'll niver take a swear on it, for fear of tellin' a lie unbeknown. Yes, sir, me mother is often tellin' us them tales; but if it is true, she's not worth the fretting for; and I'd just shove her out of my heart, and I'd niver go spoiling me good looks wid the auld whisky, nor put me futs into the gutter, nor me head in the ditch, for the bravest lassie that iver stepped on brae."

"Sonsie!" said Jan, listening admiringly to the swift flow of her crisp words, enriched with their racy brogue, — "Sonsie, haven't you made a mistake about your birthplace: are you not Scotch, instead of Irish?"

"No, *sir*; I'm Irish, sir, clear through and through. We're from Ulster county. Me father was a weaver, to home, and me mother a brave little spinner, though she was an O'Rourke of Briefne; and 'tis good blood, the O'Rourkes."

"Ah! that explains. Ossian and Burns are oddly mingled in your phraseology; put together, and projected with a grace and

fervor which is decidedly your own. But Sonsie, my good child, you must not say 'fut.' F-o-o-t spells foot, you perceive."

"Thanks, friendly sir," she replied gravely; "so it does; I'll remember. I'm always grateful for good advice."

"So am I," replied Jan, smiling. "And so you think I am a drunkard, Sonsie, do you?"

"People say it of you, Mr. Vedder. They say, Poor lad, he's just rin' his self and brak'ing the sweet heart of his purty little lady mother, and him the last son and prop of the family."

Jan sat drumming on his hat, and gazing down the hill in silence, and Sonsie had too much tact or modesty to interrupt the current of his meditations.

"By Jove! this blue-eyed emerald, whose mother is like the flax-flower, is a free-spoken preacher," he thought; "and very likely she's more than half right. Peter hinted something the other day: he has been thinking or hearing in the same vein. My mother never looked a sideways look at me in her life; but neither would she, if I broke her heart, I suppose. They call me, 'poor Vedder,' do they? I'd like to catch anybody with the word on his lips. I'd knock it down his throat. I used to see the boys take after old Pettibone. I've helped him out of the mud, and got him home many a time. They used to call him 'poor Pet;' and his wife went to the grog-shop and begged the fellow on her poor old knees not to give her husband liquor, because if he had one taste he'd never stop till he got soaked. And the sneaking dog laughed in her face. I was there and saw it. I'd just got my first horse then; and I went like a deuced fool, and offered to give it to the grog-seller if he'd promise never to let Pet drink at his bar; and I begged it, with tears in my silly eyes. And what a hug I got from my mother, when she heard of it! Lord! Well, am I breaking my mother's heart? Nonsense! She is merry and gay; and as for me, I'm all right;

I'm a gentleman. I know how far to go; I suppose I can stop when I like. I am no slave to my appetites; no nor to other people's whims either, if it comes to that. I shall do as I please."

He reached his hand absently behind him, and took out from his pocket a leathern flask.

"What are you going to do, Mr. Vedder?" exclaimed Sonsie, drawing away in sorrowful surprise.

"Just treat resolution, my good child!" He held it up before her and shook it, and listened to the "chicker" of the fragrant liquor. "Pure Irish whisky," said he; and he pulled off the cup and half filled it. "Here's long life to you, and I, and pussy, Sonsie; and confusion to our enemies!"

He drank it off, replaced the cup, and met the girl's reproachful, indignant, disappointed glance, with a look half-foolish, half-bravado.

"I hope Miss Belle will jilt ye, Mr. Vedder; you deserve it! She's a very proud young lady, and should think too highly of herself to marry wid a whisky-jug! and that's what ye ar', then, just entirely!"

"Come, come! be careful what you say; you might make me angry. 'Tis a lonesome place up here, Sonsie; and as to that, I think no small beer of myself; and if Miss Brandon wont have me, there are plenty of handsome girls, good waltzers, "queens of society," who will pucker their mouths to "prunes and prism," or widen them to squash and alloes, to get such a fellow as I am for a husband. Oh, yes, Sonsie! I don't need go begging; not if I drank till I fell under the table every day after dinner. I've bags and bags of money, you see; and women love money."

"No true lady would marry a pig for his sty, nor take you for your money, sir. Not wid the taint of that stuff on you

lips and the baleful fire of it in yer eyes all red and blood-shct."

"You think so?" asked Jan, half insolently, half in bitterness. "You betray lamentable ignorance of polite society, child, and of your dear, artless sex. You should see the piles of notes in my waste basket, and the sweet looks I get from the young beauties, and the caresses from the mammas; and you should taste the jolly old brandy and the choice wines the papas bring out in my honor. But I don't care that for them all! I'm tired of the whole string! They all talk just alike, and go into ecstasies over the same things. Belle Brandon is a brick! She can drive four-in-hand, and she plays a capital game of euchre. She's original, and spirited, and clever, and afraid of nothing! But, as you say, she does not care a pin for me; and I've thought my last thought about her. By Jove, Sonsie! I've a fancy for you. I'll pass by the ladies and I'll make love to you. You've got a bright eye, full of mischief, and a thrilling, sweet voice; you can sing, I'll engage. I like your racy tongue, which tells your fresh thoughts in such a charming, rich brogue. I'll buy you a Steinway, and you shall have lessons. I'll give you horses, and dresses, and jewels; every thing you ask me for. And one gay morning you will wake up from your rosy slumber and find yourself a fine lady, as fine as the finest of them."

He tried to put his arm around her waist, and brought his mouth close to her's as if he would kiss her; but she kept her eyes fixed on his face, and flashed a look at him, which fully illustrated her power to take her own part; and caused him to draw back, looking foolish.

"You are quite right, sir, to insult me," said she, proudly, "since I so far forgot me station as to try to do you good. Sonsie Eagan is no fit wife for a gentleman; but Sonsie Eagan

is far to good to mate wid a drunkard! And, by the same token, yer not the pathern of a husband for a clean-skinned, right-minded Irish lassie. Faugh! what a whiff of raw whisky! Yer very breath is burning up wid it! I'm sick of yes, entirely!"

She drew herself away with her head up, showing her white throat, and began pick up Rainbow into her apron, getting ready to go.

"I thank ye kindly, Mr. Vedder, for yer goodness to me and me poor cat, and I wish, wid all me soul, that ye was a better fellow."

Jan laughed, and his eyes deepened; he involuntarily straightened his broad shoulders, interested and aroused.

"Don't leave me, Sonsie. I've made an ass of myself, *that's* plain; but don't bear malice. I didn't kiss you, you know. You can afford to forgive me. Come, shake hands, and let's part friends. I shall not forget my lesson. You need not be afraid of me."

"And is it fear that ye'd be spakin' to me about?" retorted Sonsie, scornfully.

Jan looked smilingly at her.

"I've made another misstep, I see; pray don't extinguish a poor, innocent fellow. You said you wanted a sweetheart."

"No, sir! Mr. Vedder, I said not that at all. Of course, I shall have one some day; but the boy that'll touch one drop of that nasty stuff is not the sweetheart for me! And, oh, Mr. Vedder!" (Sonsie's voice trembled with her earnest feeling), "I wish ye could promise yer soul niver, niver to touch it no more!"

Jan sprang up.

"By Jove! I'll do it, Souse! I've taken my last drink, so help me Heaven! He dropped the flask into the middle of the burning stump; from which soon a sharp crash was heard,

and a blue flame mounted in spiral tints, like Asmodeus set free from his bottle. "Now am I forgiven, Sonsie?"

"Yes, sir!" Sonsie thrust out both her hands, which Jan took in his: her humid eyes glistened, and her face kindled with enthusiastic joy. "May the good God give ye strength to be thrue to yer vow!"

Jan smiled back her enthusiasm one instant, and then he sank down on the log where she was still sitting; and the habitual listless, indifferent look crept back into his face, and the fire faded from his eyes.

"But what am I to do? What is my stupid life good for?"

"Augh! for shame, sir, to talk like that! If you had seen the misery I've put me two sorrowful eyes onto, and felt the sore want pinching yer very life out wid the hunger-pang, and yer sisters and brothers shivering wid the cold, ye couldn't forget how it feels, and fold yer hands, and roll up yer eyes, and say, 'What'll I do wid me laziness?' Do! why go to work, sure! Put yer life into stopping the sufferin' and the woe that's cryin' out everywheres for such as you to help 'em!"

"Very well, Sonsie," replied Jan, to whom the signs of Sonsie's affluent nature, and her fervid, impassioned ways were agreeable; "very well! Tell me where to begin; I'm ready to learn of you. A work that'll be interesting, absorbing. I've had enough of the petticoats; they are a weariness to the flesh."

"How old are you, Mr. Vedder?" asked Sonsie, abruptly.

"Few and evil are the days of the years of thy servant, — barely twenty and one!" answered Jan, with a half-amused, half-blasé look into her earnest eyes.

"And how much money have ye to show for all that same?"

The young fellow looked curiously at her, and wondered what train of thought she was following, and threw out his reply as a lure.

"I'm sure I cannot tell you. Cousin Vedder keeps my books. I suppose there might be half a million, or maybe a million. Not enough to buy an honest girl, as you have just taught me."

"Half a million !" repeated Sonsie, unheeding Jan's sneer. "Tens, hundreds, millions ! What a thing to be a man, and own money like that ! And there sits the lazy Dutchman, wid his chin in his fingers, and says he's nothing in his life worth the havin' ! Holy saints be praised for me, bein, but the slip of a wild Irish lassie, wid the heart and soul inside me to feel for my fellow-sufferers, and a pair of strong arms and willin' hands to work for em ! Whisper now, Mr. Vedder ; don't be talkin'. I'll give ye the sound of some words that'll take the mockin' smile off yer lips, and bring the tears to yer eyes ; if ye've the love of yer kind hidid up in that gret body of yours ; and 'tis thrue for you, yer should have, by the look of ye ; so honest and merry. They all say ye's a good chap, as is nobody's enemy but his own."

Jan was not over pleased with this estimate of him so carelessly given, and was about to throw back a jeering speech in payment, when Sonsie placed her hand on his arm.

"Listen, sir," said she, and began reciting, —

"Her garments were thin, and ragged, and scanty."

Jan remained quiet, looking at her in a lofty, half-amused way ; studying the expression of her face ; thinking what an odd, bright, fearless creature she was ; running his eyes over her crisp curls and crimson cheeks, and following the play of her red lips, and the glistening of her little white teeth, in the poetry which she rendered with impassioned manner, and rich Irish accent. When she put her hand on his arm, he looked at its round, supple fingers, and had half a mind to place his own

above them ; but somehow he couldn't quite do it ; though she was a servant in shabby clothing, and he a gentleman in fine raiment. She had not gone many lines, when he began to attend, and soon became absorbed ; and when she came to the part, —

“ Yes, ask dear Christ to comfort them, and fold them in his fold,”

he found it convenient to drop his eyes into his soft hat, and sat quite motionless till she had finished, and a moment after. Then he stole a look at the fervid speaker, whose hands were clasped, and down whose hot, crimson cheeks great tears were dropping ; and Mr. Jan twisted his head over his shoulder, and pretended to be busy with brushing the moss and tree-soil from his hunting coat ; but his voice trembled through his assumed carelessness when he spoke.

“ You have got a fortune in your voice, Sonsie. What a Fanchon you'd make ! You ought to study for the stage ! Pray, where did you pick up that moving little poem ? — touching, positively !”

“ I had it from my white angel, who will fold her wings close to the Holy Mother in the Palace of the Great King.” Then, with one of the sudden transitions of which the volatile Milesians are so capable, she added, smiling queerly, and showing her white teeth, as she threw an odd merry look at her neighbor, “ And there'll be niver the sign of a lazy Dutchman about the place, at-all-at-all.”

Then she wiped her eyes on the corner of her apron. “ Why don't you be a *coöperative*, Mr. Vedder ; or have a home for the friendless and the orphans ? There's Teddy and the baby'll start the business for ye ; and a likely pair they are. And I'll lend ye me nother too, to make a matron of, if ye'd be thanking me ; and sure, 'tis just meself could be of use too. I've been

learning pinchin' and savin' wid the ould dragon for something I hope."

"What's a coöperative, Sonsie?" asked Jan, not at all impressed by the idea. "I don't care a pin about the Gonecussets or their operatives: you must fix on something more taking than that, if you wish to enlist my sympathies. I say, Sonsie, you are a good child; smart, bright, quick-witted, and nice-looking." He looked fixedly at her. "I'll do something for *you*, if you will let me. Now tell me, what do you desire most in all the world?"

"Idication," replied Sonsie, concisely.

"Oh, very good, my dear; you possess the soul of wit, in your communications, which are of the "yea, yea") order, and, idication, you shall have — all you can take in. I'll put you in school to-morrow, and you shall stay as long as you like. The more you learn, the better I shall be suited."

"Tst-tst! tst!" Souseie made the peculiar call with which the old Irish wives are wont to entice their pigs. "Indade an'ye will, sir? and what for will ye do that same?" She fastened her blue eyes upon his half-averted face in a penetrating gaze.

"Why! you aggravating, suspicious young vixen," answered Jan (stooping down to pick up a couple of pebbles which he was kicking about under his boot, and which, when he had got them in his palm, had no beauty to render them desirable), "for the luxury of doing good, of course: haven't you been preaching it up to me? You will do as a specimen to practise upon as well as another, I suppose; and I am quite fired with impatience to begin. I feel a glow of all sorts of emotions kindling in my soul; I'm reformed! I'm a hero. There's the bottle-imp consigned to his native element to witness for me. It seems to me possible, that, with careful culture of the germ of goodness which is springing in my heart, I may even rise to a pitch of virtue worth the acceptance of the dashing young

emerald who is tilting up her precious nose, in such amiable scorn."

Before Jan had finished the speech, curiously compounded, from his mannish dislike to be brought to book, squirming under Sonsie's contempt for his idle, purposeless life, his admiration of her fresh face, and an underthought, which caused him to drop his eyes beneath her clear-seeing gaze, which was reading him like an open book, — he was sorry he had spoken at all.

"Thank you, Mr. Jan Vedder. No," said Sonsie, after sitting silent long enough to make the pause very unpleasant to the young fellow, "I'll go to Mistress Blair, and be her servant; I'll wash her dishes, and scrub her floors, and learn all she will be heavenly kind enough to teach me. If you had made me the good offer, as a true man that has money to lend, *might* have made it to a poor girl, I'd have taken up wid it, and blessed ye on me knees. I know quite well, sir, what it is. I've to do; I don't need you nor any person else to tell me what I am. I've been edicated some ways all I could bear. I've seen the dirty places in the world, and I've heard vile talk before this day; but I've never soiled me soul amongst it all. When there was scant encouragement to keep me on the right track, nobody told me; but I think the Holy Mother herself watches over the poor lone girls, and I shall beg her to-night, before I sleep, and every night and mornin', to let me take the good care of meself always; in particular when there's the double faced gentlemen in me path, whose wicked eyes say one thing, and their cunnin', deceptive lips another, till she sends me angel with the white wings for me to fly on, when she beckons me across the dark river."

She gathered up Rainbow in her skirt and walked swiftly away, without a parting glance, and Mr. Jan sat musing and

motionless on the mossy tree-trunk long after the last flutter of her faded old garments had disappeared from his sight.

As the setting sun ceased to temper the chilly wind, he rose and swung his game-bag over his shoulder, and whistled his dog, and took slowly the way down across the meadows, and thence to the highway; turning over, as he went, the afternoon's events; recalling Sonsie Eagan's bold words, and free, independent gestures; and revolving the new ideas and odd plans which were dimly floating through his working brain. And the well-made, good-tempered, good-looking, unselfish young fellow, who, as Sonsie told him, had never been anybody's enemy but his own, had ample time and opportunity before him to learn that "there is not an error, which does not sheathe its retribution."

CHAPTER V.

OLD FRIENDS WITH NEW FACES.

AND this is uncle Alec's Mexican abiding-place; and there is the glorious old fellow, seated on the wide veranda, in the airiest of costumes; nothing superfluous about him; no coat, nor vest, over his plaid linen shirt, which is of the finest, and fresh from the laundry of old Chapeta. His iron-gray hair is still moist and curly from his morning bath, and his ruddy cheeks shine with the polishing they got under the cool shower; his long silky beard flows down over the delicate frills he has always worn upon his bosom since his early manhood. His father wore the like before him, and also his grandfather, and *his* father, the Scottish gentleman, who died up at Craigenfels, and was buried beneath a tablet on the hill-side

close behind the little gothic church; and among the tale of *his* virtues was the statement that he was "a good and loyal subject to King George."

No cramping necktie confines uncle Alec's throat, but his roomy collar turns away from his pillar of a neck, and the diamond-stud which fastens it glistens rarely. Its fellows hold his snowy wristbands; and the handkerchief across the knees of his linen pants is fine and white; his silk braces are 'broidered with marvellous needle-work, and buckled with golden buckles; and slippers of scarlet velvet, rich with silken flowers, incase his feet; and altogether the genial old fellow looks a very cool, comfortable specimen of a Mexican planter taking his ease — at peace with himself and the whole world.

One shapely white hand caresses the head of a young tiger-cat, who crouches at his side, and whose yellow eyes blink sleepily under the pleasant touch, though he never forgets that one of his great powerful paws lies across the wide brim of his master's palmetto, of which he considers himself in charge, Spotty has something of his own to watch, too; for a Diogenes Hermit crab (which he encountered in his morning ramble, climbing a tree, with a great turbo-shell on his back, as unconcerned as though it had been a feather-weight) lies on the gravel walk. Hunter Spotty brought him home despite his horrible odor and his noisy croaking. The great claw which Hermit keeps over the entrance of his shell, like a door, doesn't cheat cunning Spotty: he sees it lift a trifle occasionally, and sees also the projecting foot-stalk in which our crab wears his sharp eyes like a black bead; and then he growls, for he knows that his prize meditates getting safe off presently.

A gentle-eyed tapir also is an object of Spotty's surveillance, who comes smelling along, with her head down, feeling about for something juicy, with that abbreviated bit of a proboscis of

hers, and wagging her end of a tail and snuffling. As she is about four feet high, you feel at a loss whether to consider her a very large hog or a very small elephant, and finally settle down to the conviction that she is a connecting link between the two. She is a very loving mother to that pretty young one of hers, so beautifully marked with yellowish tan-colored stripes, and diamonds upon its brown-black hide ; and her kind master, with whom she is accustomed to take all sorts of liberties, — sticking her trunk into his pocket and abstracting the pistachis nuts ; passing it over his hands and face, conversing occasionally in her curious shrill whistle, — is very fond her.

Spotty has often tried his teeth upon Tapir's thick skin, and once he fastened himself on to her back, intending to make a finish of her ; but she erected her stiff mane, and giving voice at intervals, like an engine, she set off, carrying her nose close to the ground, through the thick brush, hoping to sweep away her unwelcome rider. Not succeeding, she made for the lake, and plunged in. She, Madame Tapir, is mistress of two elements. Hunter Spotty has breathing apparatus for but one, and he is glad to leave go, and swim for his dear life. Twenty feet deep of cold water is too deep for him ; but though he looked smooth and glossy after his enforced bath, he does not like Madame, nor her pretty young one either, and he shows his teeth, and snarls at them both.

An armadillo (*Bolita, little ball*) lies in the corner of the wide veranda, with its head and feet drawn into its armor, as the easiest mode of getting rid of two troublesome scarlet and green parrots, who, while scolding and nipping each other, are making common cause against the mailed ball on which they stand, knocking and rapping the polished plates, with as much effect as though they had been solid steel. And all the denizens of the veranda are objects of interest to a grave, sad-faced

marimonda, who, seated on a perch out of reach, with its prehensile tail, limb-like, turned around a rod above its head, is watching their motions with the sober, speculative curiosity, which is peculiar to those gentle little creatures, so affectionate and teachable, and so airily fantastic in their gambols with their human associates.

Uncle Alec glances from time to time at a friend who occupies a bamboo-chair, on his right, who sits, chin in hand, and eyes looking straight over the *cerros* into the tree-tops, tossed by a breeze which has a few light clouds under convoy, and hurries them helter-skelter across the heavens, but which comes not near to the humanity below, sighing and panting for a breath of it. This reticent friend, who says nothing about himself or his family, is a care and a puzzle to kind Uncle Alec, who would gladly make all the world happy, and who is accustomed to lavish money and kindness with handful heartiness; but he cannot fathom this melancholy, or understand this silent grief, to which no willing voice is ever given. He is a great bronzed giant of a fellow, this friend; with crisp curls, massive head, and a determined, powerful face; strong to do, and also to endure; but whose repose and strength is half negated by sorrowful eyes, which gaze out with sad wistfulness and unrest, and whose firm red lips, shadowed by their silky mustache, are too closely pressed together to show the strong white teeth his merry smiles used to reveal. His deep chest heaves occasionally with unconscious sighs, and his fingers beat out the fragment of a melody which is always ringing in his ears, —

"The cricket sings under the hearth,
The bird is asleep on the tree."

There isn't much to the words, and the air is very simple; but they bring up a picture before the giant, of a rosy-cheeked

young mother and her baby, sitting before a cheerful wood-fire in the gloaming; sitting there and waiting, and his fingers beat out the tune upon the braided arm of his bamboo-chair, while his thoughts are busy among his memories.

He is a tremendous worker, is the giant, — tireless, unflinching, unsparing of his muscle; nearest to content when his plastic fingers are busy among levers and wheels, and the delicate machines which he delights so curiously to fashion. Many child's toys are cunningly wrought by this silent man, and he hoards them with careful, almost tender devotion, and goes often to repolish and retouch them, and is fond of carving a name upon them, — "Pigeon." It is always the same, but is diversely wrought, — in Old English, in German Text, and delicately emblazoned with colored capitals. He read in a stray newspaper of a man who made an engine from a silver half-dollar, and he got to work directly; and it afforded him many quiet hours of engrossing toil; complete and delicate in every part, from the tiny boiler, which held about eight drops of water, to the two minute gauges; and when he had kept it running five minutes on its supply, he put it safely aside under the same mark he gave his toys, — "Pigeon." Once he began a "Ruth," upon a work-box of campeachy wood, but before it was finished, he rushed out to the mines and set his strength to dig with the *Pepanderes*, till dead night; and when he returned, he covered the "R" and the box out of his pained sight and hid it away.

He has not been many months at San Christabel; but the miners both fear and love him; they obey his lightest word.

Sagacious, practical Uncle Alec has an active coadjutor in all his schemes, which the giant grasps in full extent and minute detail, elaborating and working them out successfully.

Now that we meet Uncle Alec in his Mexican home, it is easier to comprehend the charm which keeps him an exile from

his native land. Even Craigenfels can scarcely compare with San Christabel for beauty. The Quinta is queen of a wide ravine, almost a valley, backed by abrupt and lofty mountains, which were seared and torn with deep *barrancas* abounding with fearful precipices, terrible chasms, which nature kindly veiled under a drapery of trailing vines and ever-greenery, and which are the favorite home of beautiful dun-colored squirrels, hares, and divers singing-birds, as well as tiger-cats and monkeys. Stretching away, in view of the broad veranda, rise the *cerros*, which are cut into a series of terraces, each with a gravelled walk leading high and higher to the wooded top of the last acclivity, from which the view is simply entrancing, far beyond civilization past cocoa-nut groves and palm clusters, and the sidewise sweep of the glittering river.

The red gravel drive-way—kept scrupulously free from the encroaching Bermuda grass—winds through the ground, skirts the piazza, and defines a gorgeous garden full of tropical beauties, and encircles also the *Tierra de los duendes*, as Uncle Alec is fond of calling the great enclosure where nature has been scarcely assisted in this *terra calicentie* in arranging her charming groups of shining-leaved trees and the pretty shrubs which droop their pendent blossoms above the rippling and subdued Arroyato, which lingers a little, to sing its song beneath them, on its merry journey of tireless play to the sounding sea. Within the light cane-fence of the flower-garden bloom the fine ladies of the Mimosa tribe, side by side with the odorous acacias, though they shrink coyly from human touch, and are even exclusive toward their rougher relations, who dwell in the “larger liberty” of the *Tierra de los duendes*; and shy observers are they of the fairy revels. “The breath of the breeze and the caresses of the butterfly are the only things they love.” The scarlet and rosy cactii are on friendly terms with the brilliant pas-

sion-flowers, whose fervid hues outrival the rainbow; the convulvuli, more lovely here than elsewhere; the wondrous lilies of golden yellow and burning crimson; the delicate tiger-flowers, creatures of a day; the scarlet Turk's caps, the pale azure ageratums, and the roses — ah! such roses. Persia in all her glory never dreamed of the like. "Unhappy the man who has never had his eyes fill with tears at the sight of a particular flower. Such an one can have been neither a child nor a youth. He can have had neither mother, sister, nor affianced bride. He never loved."

"Our children know each wild-wood smell,
The Bayberry and the fern;
The man who does not know them well
Is all too old to learn."

Uncle Alec plucked the jasmines white as the lily, scarlet as the pomegranate, and golden as the shining butter-cup, and fastened them with the homely bind-weed he had coaxed to thrive in a sheltered dell; and though Elinor Walsingham was four and forty now, he could bury his face among his favorites, and see a vision of sparkling eyes and bright-hued cheeks. Nay, he could hear her very voice. He brought a cluster of "capucines" to George the next morning after he reached San Christebel. "The god Vishneu," said he, smiling, "sought a wife, and he found her in the calyx of a rose;" and he pondered much over the paleness and passion which swept the giant's face. But he did not know that the odor of Ruth's tea-roses were wafted to him through the open window while he sat and wrote his farewell letter to her, nor that he had snatched a bunch of buds and kept them sacred in the *mouchoir*-case she gave him for his birthday. Flapping their gauzy wings upon the edges of the flower-cups, are myriads of soft-green dodos, scarlet admirals, and tortoise-shelled butterflies; the pretty spotted insects which

children call Lady Birds, "*petites tetes du bon Dieu*," are hiding in the hearts of the roses; the turquoise-winged, golden-billed bluebird trills a measure from an acacia-branch, and the pepper-trees are ringing with the shrill drums of the cicadæ; and purple and green humming-birds sip the cactus sweets and flit and tremble above the jasmines; and scarlet censoneles rest among the broad-leaved trees; and there is a family of arsapans (those cunningest of all squirrels), noisily at home in the branches, not a whit disturbed by the chattering of the coffee-colored children who are lazily stretched in the swinging hammocks below them, like bronze images, and upon whom they throw blossoms and fruits at their sweet will.

In the distant *corales*, the dun cattle are browsing, and the workers in the peach-orchards stand out clear-cut in the transparent air, the purity and softness of which gives an extended vision which would sound fabulous in the recital of a story-teller. Besides the vivid verdure and gorgeous flower-colors in his Mexican home, Uncle Alec has all sorts of luscious fruitage to comfort him, and his breakfast-table is a rare show of sweet-smelling good things. Craigenfels is away in the background, though pears and apples and their *confreres* abound in its orchards, and grapes, figs, and nectarines turn juicy and rich within its glass shelters. Uncle Alec says Mexico is a rare old country, and it ought to be annexed.

San Christabel itself is an interminable, many-roomed dwelling, with windows like doors, and lofty ceilings; curious porches and vast corridors and galleries, whose mission seems to be to stretch over all the ground possible. It is furnished with every conceivable comfort — every imaginable hot-weather luxury. The cane and bamboo-chairs invite to quiet and cool repose, and the divans suggest pleasant musings; and the broad verandas remind of fragrant cigars, dreamy sittings, and spun-out talks

of home and home loves. They are supported by shining pillars of smooth *sabrino*, stripped of their bark. The walls of the dwelling, within and without, are of clean planed boards, which would be a fortune at home, so rich and rare are they; no paint, no varnish anywhere, but absolute white cleanliness. A Spanish maccaw has retired to the *azotea* for practice of a new lesson, which does not sound pious; and he mixes it up with ecstatic laughter and self-adulation, besides barking and yelping enough for a whole litter of puppies.

Among the distant *cerros*, but clearly discernible from Uncle Alec's arm-chair (thanks to the pure atmosphere), are the *quintas* of his few chosen friends, who come and go on their high-stepping *brascadors*, as the mood takes them, even as "the wind bloweth where it listeth."

It is seven o'clock. Uncle Alec has been in the saddle three hours or more, riding over his *cafetele*; and he has just told his friend (who came from the *realito* where Jason the overseer is "putting through" a new gallery, most exultingly) that he has fifteen trees in full berry, which must yield him twenty pounds each.

He is quite ready for the *pasillo de chocolate*, which the page brings him; and he takes it with a droll gibe at the bronze cupid; and a stolen look at the silent friend, who has not changed his position, nor even moved a muscle in all the mingled motion and jumbled sounds about him. Uncle Alec shakes his head and sighs; he has done it often before.

"*Un clavo saca otro clavo.*" "One nail drives out another." The genial gentleman has lived long enough among the Spaniards to be fond of using their proverbs. "Come! he shall talk! Out, thou dumb spirit! — look George, is not yon little maiden called Zitella a picturesque young creature?"

He points to a girl who is watering the roses. She wears the

ordinary servant-dress of white, which is simply purely clean; her petticoat embroidered with a band of scarlet fern-leaves at bottom, and above it a short chemise, sleeveless, leaving her neck and arms bare. Her hair is put off her face and fastened in a broad thick plait at the back, which reaches far below her knee, and finished with silver bells. A great comb of filagree work crowns her head, from which she has removed the *rebozo*, or scarf, which it keeps in place when she goes abroad. Then Zitella throws one end of her national head-gear over her shoulder, and the scarlet fringe falls gracefully to her waist; her slender legs are bare; so are her feet; and her bronze ankles are round and firm enough for a model, and every toe is perfect. She is a favorite servant and she wears armlets of virgin silver, and a necklace of great Mexican pearls. Uncle Alec bought them of a *lepero*, whom he encountered one evening rather unexpectedly, stretched at full length under the aloe hedge. He said he was waiting to shoot some of the Spanish vultures which were roosting in long lines on the trees, black, grave, and silent. He pointed them out with his brown finger half a mile away, and then he produced the pearls from his bosom. No sooner did he receive his money (a couple of Spanish dollars), than he set off to join his friends; and in another hour the "dusky palque" was master of them all.

Zitella is a pious girl, and tells faithfully the beads of the shining rosary which hangs from her girdle; she never considers her toilet complete without them, and her best friend and protector's name is oftenest on her lips mingled with the *Aves*. Stay! there is one other; but we won't tell tales of a modest child, who loves in secret. Old yellow-skinned Chapeta looks upon the slender maid with little favor; but she is a simple innocent for all that; she is ignorant too, but knows her duties, and does them faithfully, and is all alive with gratitude to her mas-

ter, "Señor Aleka." She has some accomplishments : she can dance the gay bolero and springing cachucha, swaying her agile body, coiling and uncoiling her supple arms, and beating the castanets with her pretty brown fingers. The old yellow-skinned Chapeta could, perhaps, once, but it was a long time ago. Uncle Alec loves to see Zitella dance, and to hear her sing her wild Indian songs, and he has a dim intention of sending her to Roaring River to be taught, but lazily postpones it. She heard something of such a plan once, which she only understood as a threat of exile from her dear home, and she redoubled her efforts to please and serve. She simply adores Señor Aleka, and she has good cause : she made acquaintance with bitter suffering and keen hardship, such as homeless outcasts know, before she found shelter in San Christabel.

Passing, one evening, by the *palquera* of the Good Friends, he came upon a group of *leperos*, squatted on the ground, getting as drunk as lords upon their "heavenly palque" and jumped off his *brazcador* and scattered them right and left with his good riding-whip. He was enraged by the screams of a little brown mite who was crouching helpless on the ground, and he laid his Malacca smartly about the shoulders of the old hag who was beating her with a paddle. The poor baby was a wretched bundle of rags and filth, but she looked at the gentleman with such beseeching eyes, hushing her frantic sobs, and clasping her small hands, as she crawled to his feet, that the tender-hearted old fellow could not make up his mind to leave her behind him to the cruel vengeance he saw glittering in the snaky eyes which tortured and devoured her prospectively ; and he struck a bargain with the *lepero*, and paid roundly for the pleasure of being kind, in shining gold pieces, and stuck his foundling up behind him on his *brazcador*, who snorted and tossed his long mane in disgust at the queer burden. And so

San Christabel was her Paradise, and good Señor Aleka her Providence. Old yellow-skinned Chapeta made horrible faces and grunted out some Aztec gutturals, for a reception of the stranger ; but Zitella has managed to lead a gay, free life in spite of her. Why should she fear, while El Señor is her friend? but should he ever leave San Christabel, he would do wisely to marry the little maid to some honest fellow, or she might fare hardly. "A favorite has no lovers."

A *caratella* approaches along the winding drive, and Uncle Alec leaves his frolic with the young tapir and pushes off the mother, and looks up expectantly. It draws to the door, and the driver springs to the ground and leans against his horse in an attitude of lazy grace, while his passenger alights. He is fully alive (this driver) to the truth that he is a handsome fellow, and enjoyingly mindful of the side-glances which simple Zitella gives him from among her roses ; and he shows his white teeth in a gay smile, when the crimson flames up in her dusky cheek ; and he turns up his mustache, and drops his eyes over his jaunty dress, which he evidently considers quite the thing. His Mexican hat, which he holds in one hand, has a brim six inches wide, a low crown surrounded with silver lace and ornamented by a flaunting feather ; his striped flannel jacket, sleeveless, displays his bronzed arms, modelled like a youthful Ganymede ; his flashy silken sash, which girds him instead of braces, has a horse-pistol in one side, and a bright cutlass in the other, and both of them Hilario knows well how to use ; his pea-green breeches are open at the knee, and thickly studded down the seams, with bright silver buttons ; *luada la jara* boots of stamped leather, having a pair of vast spurs on the stiff heels (without which no Mexican feels himself quite a man). He flashes his dark penetrating eyes, and rests one hand on his cutlass, as the force

brigand might have done, who wooed the Spanish maid, Zí'ek, beneath the round-orbed moon in old Castile.

"George Blair!" exclaimed Uncle Alec. "We have a visitor from home!"

Both gentlemen started to their feet, but with widely differing welcomes in face and attitude, as the traveller descended from his *caratella*, with weary gesture, like one fatigued with tiresome journeying.

"Ye gods and little fishes!" Uncle Alec spread his hands in fantastic astonishment. Unless he be dead, and has arrived at the dignity of a ghost, this should be my nephew Otho. Why you come upon us like a shooting star! You drop down upon my very door-step, as easily as my neighbor San Juan, who breakfasts with me three mornings out of the seven; and yet you should smell of the salt ocean; you are fresh from the yeasty waves, the cradling billows, have been wooed by "westlin winds." Whew! my dear boy, don't you know it is dangerous to astonish a fat elderly gentleman to such an extent? Make haste slowly, is the only wear with the thermoneter at ninety in the shade."

Uncle Alec was entirely oblivious to the fact that his hasty rising had overset his cane-seat upon Spotty, who withdrew snarling and sneezing; and began to pace up and down, with his head on one side, licking his lips, occasionally, as he eyed the humans; but at this point a scuffle and rush, and a piteous cry, caused the host to turn around. Somehow Spotty had run against the little tapir; and I suppose he nipped him, because every hair on his mother stood on end, and her tail was wiggling about and her teeth were champing; and the maccaw shouted out provoking laughter, when the marimonda dropped upon Spotty's back from his sightly perch, and he turned tail and ran away. Not that Mr. Maccaw knew any thing of what was

going on, only he heard a yelping and scuffle from his sightly perch ; and he always, upon principle, helped out any hubbub.

"Otho, my dear fellow, welcome to San Christabel !" said Uncle Alec, after laughing at the fracas. Come, hasten and give us news of little pet. How I should love to see her pretty face among my flowers ! and, by Jupiter, she'd flame every individual of them for you, without a Flora. Why didn't you bring her along ? — two years not up, hey ? and Sir Masterful will not 'bate one jot of his determination. I've a great mind to send you back for her : give you a good Mexican breakfast, though, first. Here, you Hilario, you've stood on one leg long enough ; never mind making any more eyes at Zitella just now ; lift out that valise. American baggage is it, nephew ? Inside there, Juan — tenth room. Rosillo, look after this gentleman : cool water, a lime, a bath, and then breakfast."

While running on thus, in a hearty voice, and with much Yankee hand-shaking, Uncle Alec had been all the while studying his guest and wondering what trouble had driven him from home. It must be trouble ; for his proud, grave face was unlighted by any smile, even while he answered his host's cordial welcome in courteous phrase.

Still holding the young gentleman's hand, he turned suddenly.

"George Blair, have you forgotten Otho Groenveldt ?"

"I assure you no ! Mr. Craigenfels," answered George, bowing slightly ; and his bitter tone said, "I have too good cause to remember him."

Otho bowed in return : he could do no less ; but the whole story which his Roaring River friends had told him, -- how this man had deserted his wife (and the best and sweetest wife in the world too) for no cause, and left her with her boy, shut up to her solitary life (so solitary that she refused to see even *him*,

the friend of her childhood) to her heart-wearing grief, to struggle with poverty.

In the instant that the two men stood facing each other, Otho weighed the young blacksmith in his mental balance, and set him down a selfish rascal, who had cut loose from his forge, and his duties, that he might seek a fortune out here in the mines; for himself, the scorn which proud, upright Otho felt for the faithless husband, the irresponsible schemer, showed in his face, scarce ruled by any effort of courtesy. He had scant time for a display of his feelings, for the giant, who had stood back, with clenched hands and thick-coming breath, turned on his heel and marched off. A blow is the natural sequence of such a look and such an attitude as his, but though his muscles worked fearfully and his veins filled, while he looked Otho in the eye, he held himself quietly. There was trouble and anger and bitterness and terrible suffering on his massive face; but no self-despising, no shame: he saddled his high stepping *brascador*, and started full *passo* for *bocca Mina*. The deep bay Dhole, whom no man could tame till George Blair took him in hand, turned his wonderfully, keen brilliant eye upon him as he appeared, and rose from his lair and shook himself, and prepared to follow his master; and the great Thibet dog, whose province it was to watch the women and defenceless folks about the *hacienda*, came and put up his hanging lips and rubbed his powerful head against the giant for the customary caress.

"All animals are living hieroglyphs,—
The dashing dog, the stealthy-stepping cat;
Hawk, bull, and all that breathe, mean something more
To the true eye, than their shapes show; for all
He made in love, and made to be loved."

There was not a dumb creature that came under George Blair's hand but felt the magnetism of his power, and rendered

him willing obedience ; and in his saddest moods he gave a word and a look to the favorites who fawned upon him. His horse was fleet, playful, and gay, but the swift motion could not quiet his tumultuous pulse-beat nor lift the sore pain which clutched his heart. . . .

A true Mexican breakfast, — earthen coolers in the windows, queer jugs on the brackets, full of flowers, the great suspended fan lazily managed by the bronze page, the table a marble slab, heaped with fruits, luscious peaches, grapes, bananas, pines, melons, grenaditoes, and the delicious chirmogas, encasing in their emerald rinds all the charming flavors of the other fruits, and are so delicate that they must be eaten with purest silver. They resent common steel, and turn rusty at its touch.

Uncle Alec received his nephew fresh from his bath, his usually colorless face wearing a sunburn on his cheeks which made his high white forehead whiter still ; his jetty mustache and thick hair glossy with damp, and a faint odor of distilled jessamine flowers, which Rosillo had sprinkled upon them, just touched and left the sense as he moved to the seat which his host offered, opposite his own, with many words of cordial welcome ; and though the genial planter admired his manly beauty, he felt unpleasantly the proud, self-contained haughtiness of his reserved manner, and he wondered again what it all meant, and he thought of little Pet, and sighed. These large-hearted men and women, who carry other people's sorrows, are most of all to be pitied ; for they groan beneath burdens they have no share in heaping, and vicariously suffer without healing the sick soul for whom they are sore wounded.

Zitella never permitted any other hands to wait upon her master at table, or other wheres, if she could serve him ; and she came with airy step and a smile wreathing her coral lips, called up by Hilario's last jest, and carried off the fruits which the two

had loitered a long while among; and brought, one by one, the savory dishes,—for Mexicans never crowd or mix their good things,—*emparranda* of dried fish, highly seasoned with chile, and mixed with pounded shrimps and oil, and baked between two thin corn-cakes; ducks stuffed with mushrooms; frigoles; hare stewed in wine; broiled quails; and, through all, the usual admixture of onions, oil, and capsicums, and the inevitable tortillos, hot with chile, which she fetched in a snowy napkin, and laid beside each plate, carefully serving Señor Aleka first. Then came chocolate prepared in the curious little *lignum-vitæ* mills, without which no *rancho* is complete. The frothy beverage thus concocted has a flavor which a stay-at-home cannot even dream of.

Uncle Alec watched his guest, in secret amusement at the Indian stoicism with which he got through a peppery meal, which needed long habit to endure, much more enjoy.

"You will do to live in Mexico, my boy! you take to pepper as naturally as a duck takes to water."

"I fully intend to live here, sir," replied Otho, without lifting his eyes from his plate.

Uncle Alec studied him, and a shade of displeasure crossed his genial face; something in the tone as well as the matter of the reply fretted and chafed him, and he felt "like speaking up;" but dear old Alec Craigenfels had "suffered and got strong" years ago, and learned a large tolerance. He took up a silver-bound goblet of golden crystal at his elbow and began praising the palque it contained, ascribing to it as many good qualities as the "Bonnie Scots" do to whiskey.

"It is a stomachic, my boy,—a great promoter of digestion and good sleep,—a sovereign cure for trouble. Strangers tell us it smells like sour milk, tainted meat, and such like. Perhaps it may, to uneducated nostrils; but we Mexicans know that it is

a wholesome and refreshing beverage." And then he launched out into a long description of the process of manufacture, and of the aloe, *Agave Americanus*; how the Indians know the precise moment of cutting the flower-stalk to secure the sap distilled by the plant for the coming bloom, and the leathern bottas in which it is fermented; and if Otho knew that his uncle was talking to keep off the relation of difficulties he dreaded, and which he felt was coming, he did not show it, but he questioned and replied with ready and grave attention.

"I must take you out to my Maguy plantation: the yellow and white spinose toothed narcissi which Thomas cherishes up at Craigenfels are babies to these fellows with their leaves eight feet long. I've a thousand in my field, and a hundred of them bloom every year. Why you see the great scooped out cup which receives our 'honey-water' is two feet deep. That is the name we give the pure sap before we ferment it. It is scentless, and thin and clear, and we take a portion of it for our 'master palque,' or mother of palque, as the Indians call it. They make a yeast from it to ferment the rest; and in four and twenty hours after setting it is in its most perfect state for drinking.

"Here, Zitella, bring us a fresh botta. Now this was made yesterday, and you perceive that it is very delicate and pleasant. Many planters make what we call Mèxical, a coarse brandy from our aloe. But I am content with my palque. The old Aztecs pound their paper from its leaves, and the Indians now pull *pitta* or twine from its fibres. So you see my boy our *agave* is a useful servant; and it is only one among many which belong to us. Mother Nature is very good to her 'children of the sun.' Well, after your first trial, what can you say for palque?"

"I think a taste might be acquired for it. It is said that the Chinese are fond of assafoetida as a perfume."

Uncle Alec laughed. "Rather hard on our native liquor, but you'll find you prefer it to wines, or even your dear American mixed drinks, which are enough to kill a horse. Howel's saying of sacks and canaries, applies richly to your champagne cocktails, brandy smashes, and such like. They are deemed fit only for those who carry their legs in their heads, their eyes upon their noses, and an almanac in their bones."

"Graphic and original, at any rate," replied Otho. "But the 'American drinks' are all strangers to me. I have no fancy for poisoning my blood and burning up my brain, with any such vile abominations. Light German wines are all very well in Germany, but even these are out place, and not needed in our nothern climate, where the air is as invigorating as champagne."

"Quite right, my boy; but still, our palque *is* a friend to man kind, a comforter in sorrow."

Otho availed himself of the first pause in the talk to say proudly, like one needing human help and sympathy, and yet despising it, "Uncle Alec, I have come to you for work; give me something to do; the more difficult and absorbing the better. Do not ask me any questions, but put me into something that will keep my head and hands busy, and let me settle Mexican at once."

Mr. Craigenfels made no reply, but sat looking across at the young man in a troubled, anxious way, and his thoughts travelled away to Roaring River and busied themselves about a young girl, named Christabel Goldsmith, who was the child of Fred the artist, his boyhood's friend, and who he knew was betrothed to this man.

'Poor little pet!' he thought. "I as good as knew that he'd

make her suffer, he's such a masterful chap. It would be as much as my life is worth, I suppose, to inquire into his affairs. Sitting there so proud and provoking! I shall have to do my best in the dark. They've quarreled, of course: that is the upshot of it; and her *sweet* life is as good as spoiled. O Lord!"

"Well, it is odd, Otho," he began aloud; "very odd; but do you know George Blair came to me in the same way, — asking for work; said he had left his life behind him; didn't want any questions asked, but must begin anew. Have you had any quarrel with George, Otho?"

"No, sir," replied Otho, loftily.

"Ah, well! he's a wrecked boat, I'm afraid; cut adrift from safe mooring; broken up almost; he is always brooding over something. But I believe he is a true man, after all. I wish I could help him out of his trouble. Have you any idea what sent him out here?"

"Not the least, sir: it is his own secret," answered Otho, coldly. "I have no wish to discuss Mr. Blair's affairs: my own life is all I can manage."

"We don't manage our lives, my boy," replied Uncle Alec, seriously and simply; "and happy are we, when we learn to *feel* the Hand which leads us. I am very glad to have you with me. I would have proposed it to you, if I had supposed you free to come; and I will be as hospitable as an Arab too. You shall keep your own counsel; only remember that when you do need advice, if such a time could ever come to such a self-possessed chap" (Otho winced), "you've a kind old uncle at hand, who loves you like his own. I want you to know all about the Mexican property; I should hate to have it fall away after I am gone. I hope you will always keep it up somehow; though, of course, I can't expect you to bury yourself out here."

"I have just told you, Uncle Alec, that I have left the

States forever; and I will enter heart and soul into your schemes."

"Weil, well, my boy, that's all very well; and it is in the dim future. We wont pin ourselves down to any sudden resolve. I have plenty of irons in the fire, all red-hot; and you shall choose which to take a clip at first. There's my *cafetelle*, I've been over it this morning; trees full of berries and as plump and green as peas, and the little *ingenio*, sugar grove, you know. Before I fixed my *trepiche*, I surveyed the ground carefully, and I count it about the neatest thing I've got. My gang of fifty hands can make ten thousand *arrobas* of sugar as easy as turn the fist over, and they will do it too. Then there's my indigo lot — that's just the prettiest little *trabajo*! fill your pocket with Spanish dollars. The Aztecs thought no small beer of it, to judge from the name they blessed it with, — '*Xiuh-quilipitzahuac*!' Pronounce that, Sir Nephew, if you are able; a mouthful, isn't it? yet it ripples off Zitella's lips as smooth as water over the pebbles. I mustn't forget to introduce you to my red-flowered night beauty; the Yankees keep it in bottles, and they give it to little boys."

Uncle Alec spread his hands over his ample stomach, and made a series of puckered faces. "Jalap, Otho! So I knew you'd remember your early acquaintance with my '*Belle de Nuit*.' It is a lovely creature — to look at. I must send some plants to Thomas. There's a pile of money in any of these, my boy; I've only amused myself among them as Mexican toys, but I haven't lost a dime, though; oh, no, I make my little sports pay. This is a great country, sir! we ought to annex it; that's gospel truth. Why wax alone would be a fortune (I've a jolly lot of bees down at my *hacienda*); and there's cochineal, and *tabasco* peppers, and aguavas, and olives, and pistacho-nuts, besides all the fruits I've placed before you this morning

'Think of the woods! — campeachy, mahogany, and a thousand others, all beautiful. O Lord!'

Uncle Alec wiped his face, which was hot with excitement over his favorite topic.

"What ever brought you Otho?" (flourishing his handkerchief, and looking very kindly in his nephew's face). "I'm sure it was nothing mean or unworthy; and whatever it was, I'm glad to have you with me. I love you, my boy; and I must begin with you directly. We'll commence this very day to look over the different works, and post you thoroughly."

Otho was checked in his reply by the sound of a zittern beneath the great open window, and a rich voice singing,—

"Gentle Zitella, whither away?
Love's ritornella, list while I play."

Glancing out, they saw Hilario seated on the ground, and the young Indian maid standing a little way off, well pleased with the song and the singer.

"Nay, nay, child, mind thy roses! Never look so shyly bright; even though his hair is jetty and his face handsome, never heed his soft Spanish words. I misdoubt me, this Hilario is too full of whims and hot tempers to be a wise guardian of thy innocence. San Christabel is a safe shelter for thee; even though the yellow-skinned Chapeta be cross and fierce, and would be cruel if she dared."

While kind Uncle Alec was listening to the voice and looking thoughtfully at Zitella, tramping hoofs came hurrying on; and the young fellow, the rider, would have hunted down the singer who touched so gaily the zittern-strings, and whose eyes drank in the young listener's beauty, had he not sprang nimbly aside; and a flush of wrath deepened his dusky red as he did so, and his ready hand sought his cutlass. Reining up his horse before

Zitella, the rider said something to her, with an unpleasant laugh, which caused her to shrink away from him. Uncle Alec frowned and looked ill pleased, though he gave the stranger courteous greeting. He was a striping; tall, slender, with muddy, impure complexion, long, straight hair, and pale-blue eyes. He and his father, Don Juan, were guests at the neighboring *hu. ienda*, and though frequent visitors at San Christabel, were no favorites with its genial owner. Their ship, moored down the bay, waited for their going; and its queer crew swore deep oaths in strange tongues at the prolonged delay. This eighteen-year-old boy took a wicked pleasure in pursuing Zitella, and the preference she showed for Hilario gave zest to his amusement. As he was come for the day, Uncle Alec asked him to join him and Otho in their ride to the mine, simply because he could not safely leave him behind.

Meanwhile George Blair had reached the *boca mina* and found it sorrounded by the men, who were waiting for a *pegador*, who was down the deep level, firing the slow matches; the swift *cabellos* were rearing and stamping about the *malacates*, their tossing heads with difficulty held in check by two half-naked Indians, till the signal for starting. Something terrible was written on all the faces; the *adminstrador* gesticulated wildly, and threw his arms about; and the miners hung their heads in silence or growled threateningly among themselves; and the wild *leperos* hung about the groups, and mingled their Aztec gutturals to the clamor of the women and children, who howled and tore their hair. George pushed his *brazcador* to the midst, and threw himself off with a hasty question.

The basket had come up empty after one blast, and no one was willing to go down to the poor *pegador*, who was of course lying dead or maimed at the bottom. No second report came

to their ears, and the call of the *administrador* was like the summons "Come forth to thy death, Victor Galbraith!"

"Here! you *barretero*! give me your hat." George seized the felt helmet from the head of a stolid miner, who stood slouching and stubborn, staring down the shaft. The lighted candle flared yellow in the daylight, and the *cabellos* started tramping on their course. George felt a grim pleasure in tempting the danger below him, and sprang to it boldly.

"Señor!" exclaimed the *administrador*, grasping the giant's shoulder, "there's death, maybe, at the end of that rope!"

"Stand back all of you!" shouted George, shaking him off. "There's a man's duty there, at any rate, which is much more to the purpose!"

In the breathless silence which followed, he descended slowly, and the yellow flame flared red and redder, as it disappeared; and the fearful hush was only broken by the creak of the cylinder, as the cord slowly unwound. Oozing water and loosening earth showed to him by seconds, out of the black darkness; and slimy reptiles looked forth from their crevices; hairy spiders darted out and glared on him with their eight thousand eyes; a shining black scorpion made a jump for the basket as it swung past his lair, and, missing his expected prey, he fixed his deadly fangs into a harmless golden lizard which was watching the light on a tiny shelf of rock, and the bright little eyes saw nothing more. George understood well the certain death he had escaped, and he fixed his thoughts on the danger he was seeking, dashing aside, with resolute will, the image of Otho Groenveldt, which kept intruding itself; banishing also, with a heart-sick sob, the pretty face of sweet Ruthie in the Horseshoe. If the matches were fired—then his minutes were counted! That was all and his *wife* was free.

He touched the lowest level, leaped quickly from the basket,

and ran warily and swiftly in quest of the *pegador*, shouting and whistling as he advanced. In a *boveda* or vaulted chamber he stopped short—the mangled head of the poor wretch was almost beneath his foot, the matches close grasped in his clenched hand; and leaping across the still body, he pursued his search. He came upon the trains in the new gallery, five of them unfired. Somehow the work had been carelessly or improperly done, and the first two had exploded before the rest were laid; and the horrible mingling of sulphurous odors and burnt flesh loaded the thick air; and bits of rock were scattered all around the place. George took up the body in his arms and carried it down to the shaft and laid him at its mouth, and covered the shattered face with his handkerchief, and turned back to his work. As he hurried past the *boveda*, he heard a scratching, scuffling noise, mixed with squealing and squeaking, which sounded oddly enough in the echoing chamber, and, stout fellow as he was, he nearly shuddered to find himself surrounded by hundreds of rats, who gambolled about him and ran over him with every sign of delighted welcome. The lowest level had been unworked for a month or so, and these creatures, were rejoiced to see humanity once more. That rats inhabit the deepest of the mines is well known, but how they subsist is not so clearly ascertained. After a little civilized creeping of his flesh, George sat down on a tram to observe what they would be at. They climbed up, and filed in squads, leaping a dozen times their length, standing upright and playing their forefeet like professional boxers; catching each other by the tail, mixing up in grotesque antics, till he rose to go toward the blast, when they followed him, and marched in platoons beside and behind him. As soon as he began laying the trains, however, they vanished: they knew all about gunpowder, and scampered off. He fired the slow matches—six of them, and hastened

from the death at his back. As he neared the shaft, he came again upon his friends the rats, but they had forgotten him : they had discovered the body of the poor *pegador*, and struggled around and over it, tearing and devouring ; and the basket had gone up out of George's reach : he saw it, by the light of his candle, slowly ascending. The tremendous power he put forth for his life could not enable him to leap high enough to seize it. The commotion the rats had made scrambling about it had been mistaken by those at the top for a signal and — the fatal matches were slowly firing behind him in the new gallery ! Just one instant the blood stopped in his heart, and sparks kindled in his eyes ; then his cool courage returned, and he set off to undo his work. He neared the trains with lightning swiftness ; he tore up the kindling threads — one ! two ! three ! — six ! — he was safe ! and after an instant's deep breath he started back, hoping to find the basket in its place again — of course they must instantly send it down, when they found there was no explosion and that it had come up empty ; but a new peril awaited him, — his candle was burning low, and he must dare the rats so as to be at the mouth before darkness overtook him. He shouted and clapped his hands, and the horrible noise he was approaching ceased for an instant ; but before he reached them his taper flared up and expired in its socket, leaving him in a thick darkness that might be felt, and his dreadful neighbors between him and the rope. No human voice could reach the upper world ; and he slowly felt his way, keeping close to the side of the gallery. Twenty or thirty steps he made in safety, and then he set his foot upon a yielding body, and hastily withdrew it. With a squeal of rage, the rat he had wounded set his teeth into his leg, and his fellows swarmed upon him to avenge their comrade. George fought them off and clenched his teeth. Keeping one hand upon the wall, he pushed on ; still there was no

basket, and his utmost efforts could not hold his enemies long at bay. He thought he must be close to the mouth but could see no light. His hands were covered with blood, his legs had already many wounds from the sharp teeth seeking his life; he struck out desperately and pushed them off, and ground them under his feet. Glancing up in grim despair, he espied a bright star. He was right, then!—this was the mouth of the shaft; but that star! it was as far off as heaven; and—well, it was a horrible death to die, but if it must be. Something struck his face a smart blow, and he seized the basket with both hands and swung himself in, but not alone, for his tormentors kept their hold. As he slowly ascended, he managed to rid himself of the half-dozen who were clinging to him; and when he reached at length the *boca mina*, he held the last one clutched in his fingers, and he dashed it to the earth as he stepped upon the firm ground once more. His shoes were full of blood, and his linen clothing streaked and grimed with the marks of his peril. Uncle Alec and Otho were waiting anxiously at the top of the shaft, and the young Spaniard, Pequillo, who strode away as he came up.

“My dear fellow! I never was so glad to see anybody in my life!” exclaimed Uncle Alec, as soon as he espied the giant’s head. “I was afraid you’d come up cold meat. Good God! what is this! why George is covered with blood!”

George’s face contracted, and he brushed the trickling drops from his cheek; he turned deadly sick as he threw one thought downward to the lowest level where lay what was left of the poor *pegador*. Otho spoke hastily, in a voice of still excitement.

“You must have help at once! lean on my arm, Mr. Blair; I see you can scarcely stand.”

The vibrating voice in his ear brought back George's strength, and he pushed past them all.

"I've a few scratches, Mr. Craigenfels; nothing tremendous. Men must be sent to the lowest level at once, with lights and arms; there is horrible work going on down there. The devils of rats are busy with that poor *pegador*. There's no danger from the blasts; the matches are all safe. Come, you *administrador*, don't stand staring there — push on your men, quick! The Thibet dog greeted George with a piteous howl; and the young Dhole's bright eyes suffused with blood, as he kept close at his master's side; his fierce wild nature kindled within him as he snuffed the dripping garments, and he drew back his lips from his sharp teeth and gave voice to a dangerous snarl. George had firmness of hand enough left to guide his *brazcador*, who had stood proudly arching his neck in absolute stillness where he was left, and he dashed joyously off with his burden. Hilario was gone with his *caratella* when he reached San Christabel, but he came upon the old yellow-skinned Chapeta talking with Pequillo, and her parchment claw clutched a bright gold piece which she hid out of sight as he galloped by, and she crept stealthily beneath the thick acacias, which closed up behind her.

Dismounting at the broad veranda, George called Zitella, who came tripping from the garden, her hands full of roses, which she dropped at sight of his blood and wounds.

"Quick! Zitella, girl! bring me some bandages and a basin of water. Only some bites from the rascally rats. I paid them a visit, and this is their idea of hospitality. Do not grow so pale, child! I'm not dead yet; oh, no, I'm good for any amount of fortune's hard knocks. Men don't die so easily.

As the giant set his teeth in grim endurance of the stinging pain, the young Indian girl flew to the hedge and gathered her arms full of a broad leaved plant which she made haste to

pound and apply to the wounds. While she was still busy, Otho came walking with quick step ; he was very white, and he spoke with an air of lofty superiority, which all his desire to serve could not control.

“ Mr. Blair, pray permit me to examine your wounds. It was a narrow escape ; fortunately I always carry my instruments about me.”

George lowered the poultice he was holding to his cheek, and held it in his great shapely hand, while he looked in the young doctor's face.

“ I do not mind such wounds as these : they are only skin deep, and easily healed. ‘ Go thy way with a merry heart, and eat thy bread with joy.’ I thank my God that he has not brought me so low as to need help from you ! And turning his back, he impatiently called, “ Come, Zitella ! hasten, and make a finish with your cataplasms. I must get out of this ; my work is waiting for me.”

Otho Groenveldt's eyes kindled. He had so far overcome his disgust at George Blair's conduct as to offer service, and this was the answer he got ! He was astonished, too, at the black look which accompanied it—the deep hate, almost ; and he solved the problem to his own satisfaction, thus :

“ When a man does a deed which makes him despise himself, he hates all who knew him in his true manhood. My presence here is a reproach to him. I was a dear and tried friend to poor Ruthie.”

CHAPTER VI.

THE TRIANGULAR DUEL.

THE gimmering dawn fought with the yellow gas-light, and a sick girl lay tossing and moaning on her restless bed. All Deacon Williams's household were asleep, and Sonsie Eagan sat watching Mary Ann, in the half darkness, and dipping a soft sponge in the cooling lotion at her side, and tenderly touching her heated forehead. This young Irish lassie had had the door slammed in her face when she left the Deacon's service, and her bits of duds chucked at her from the garret window, with hard words enough to give the bundle ballast ; but Mary Ann was down with fever now. She hardly bore the journey from Rosenbloom ; and sick folks have whims : with her arms around her father's neck, she begged to have Sonsie Eagan to nurse her. The thrifty Mamma Williams in a sick-room was like a bull in a china shop, — she knocked every thing over, and picked every thing up, and slashed every thing into place remorselessly ; she banged the doors and clattered the dishes ; she bathed the patient's head by the job, and put her muscle into the labor ; and punched the pillows, and scolded, in "a loud voice, rising early," about the trouble it was, and the housework she was neglecting, and the expense and doctor's bills ; and rated the weazened papa and the defenceless children as if they were the aiders and abettors of her wrongs. Deacon Williams proved himself a kind father and a tender, in

this first sickness among his offshoots. He nursed Mary Ann whenever he got the chance, and inclined a pitying ear to all her whispered requests. As soon as he found out this whim, he put on his tall hat, sneaked out of the back door, and went off to Ruth Blair's to fetch Sonsie. He hardly dared think how it was to be accomplished, but he trusted much to the positive, bright-skinned, wide-awake girl, for maintaining the position he was about to beg her to take, without any W. P. to back him.

Sonsie listened with her eyes on his, and comprehended the whole thing at once.

"Niver mind going back with me, sir," said she; "I'll manage for meself. Miss Mary Ann was always good to me; and she shan't ask me twic't to come to her. I'll get a stitch or two of clothes together, and speak a word to Mrs. Blair, and be off in a half-hour. Ye may set yersel at aise, just, sir."

"Yes, Sonsie, we're a band of brothers, as you may say, seemingly. I was e'ena'most afraid you wouldn't come. Miss Williams was a leetle sharp to you, I know; but you're a good girl, and my Mary Ann, she's a good girl: she said how she knew you'd come. Yes, yes, thank you. I'll pay you any wages you ask,—that is, any thing in reason, of course, seemingly."

Sonsie rang the door-bell, 32 Gonesusset Street, before the half-hour she stipulated for had ticked off its minutes on Ruth's old-fashioned clock in the kitchen of the Hoseshoe.

"I'm the new nuss, Nora," said she, showing her white teeth; "I'm goin' right away off to Miss Mary Ann, who's expectin' of me."

"Ah, mavourneen! St. Joseph bless ye for the bright, mer-ry eyes of ye! but I'm glad then to see ye here. Just kape the auld dragon out of the place, and the poor child 'ill have

a chance to get well. And ye's the sharp lass, that is a match for any Williams this day of the week, good luck to ye !”

When the Deaconess came up with a broom in her hand, and a towel pinned around her head, she opened her eyes. Sonsie was gently bathing the patient's face. She had combed her hair, straightened the bed, and was smiling while she talked in a sweet crooning voice like a lullaby ; and the sick girl followed all her motions with languid enjoyment and grateful love.

“The massey me ! What are you here for, I should admire to know ? Did you fly in, or how ?”

“I'm nursing Miss Mary Ann, just,” whispered Sonsie. “Don't ye be talkin' so loud, mistress : she's droppin' off. I'll do the sweepin' and the dustin' meself, when she wakens up. Ye needn't mind stoppin', either. I'm just goin' to sing her a bit of a purty ditty to quiet the poor nerves of her. She's all of a tremble wid your noise. Sick folks can't bear loud-talkin' voices.”

Sonsie had met Dr. Jenkins on the way down, and explained her mission, and knew he was coming up ; and she counted on him to sustain the position she was so positively assuming. “There's no way but to be master, you know, Sonsie,” said she to herself ; “or the auld draggon 'ill just tread on ye ; and its a heavy foot and hand that she's got, as ye know yersel, to yer sorrow ; bad luck to her !”

The Doctor opened the door before Mrs. Williams could find words to express her wrathful astonishment.

“Ah, Sonsie !” said he, shaking hands with the young nurse, “glad to see you.” Just the one we want, madam ! We may indeed count on a rapid mending in our patient, with this girl about her. She's as full of magnetism as an egg is of meat ; and the touch of her hand is better than any medicine. You

must give her full sway, and take some rest. I'll answer for her capacity. I am exceedingly glad you sent for her. I was about to propose it; of course, your mother-wisdom has gone ahead of me."

Mrs. Williams said not a word, but picked up her besom and duster and vanished, secretly glad to be rid of the onerous charge.

The sick-room was thereafter Sonsie's kingdom, and the doctor her prime-minister. The loud, domineering mother reaped what she had sown. Her daughter's eyes turned away from her; her forehead contracted into a troubled frown when she heard the maternal accents, harsh and rasping; and she rested more easily in her absence. But the ruddy-faced nurse got smiles in return for the hearty, hopeful words she poured out in her cheery, rich brogue; and it was she who read the comforting psalms, and the inspiring promises, from the Holy Book which she had learned to peruse.

"Indade, then, 'twas a good day that ye tached me to read, Miss Mary Ann, wasn't it, now?" said she; "and here's a purty bit of a story about the cheatin' young gomersal that hatched up a plan along wid his mother to get the whole farm for a bowl of soup — the tricksome pair of them."

She sang the plaintive hymns she got to love, — "The Shining Shore," "Oh! When Shall we Dwell in Mansions of Light," and "Down by the Margin of the River."

Sonsie brought her dear friend, Mr. Growing, whom she loved for his kind words and common-sense advice, to the sick-room, which the Deacon had failed to get the necessary W. P. for; and her eyes filled and overflowed under his earnest teachings and heartfelt prayers. She held her patient's hand in hers, and knelt by the bedside, while he pleaded for them as with a friend face to face. Poor Mary Ann's theology was all of the threat-

eing, dreadful sort ; and it was a long struggle before she could banish her fears and repose in simple trust upon the kind heart of her Christ, and feel the placid joy of sins forgiven stealing into her soul, — such peace as the world nor gives nor takes away.

Sonsie had a secret of Mary Ann's, betrayed in the long, weary night-watches, which made her uneasy. This thin-skinned, passionless girl had managed to get in love with Cymbalinus Adolphus Brown, Captain Slocum's exquisite nephew, the great originator of many "riddles ;" and she raved of him when the fever kindled in her brain, and Sonsie heard her mingle his name with her prayers. The selfish, supercilious puppy who — thanks to Belle Brandon's egging on, and to her own simplicity — was glorified in her thoughts, ought to have got a blessing out of the fervent petition.

Sonsie also knew the whole history of the anonymous letter which had broken up the Blair family and sent the young husband off no one knew whither ; for poor Mary Ann told it over and over to her, and wept and grieved sorely over her share in the cowardly performance ; and straightforward Sonsie took a private resolution on the subject, which she only waited a suitable time to carry into effect.

" "Confession is good for the soul," said she ; " and I'll just take the poor child down to Miss Ruth as soon as iver she's got ary fut to stand on. O Sonsie, ye little beggar ! will ye niver in the world learn to say *foot*, as Mr. Jan was gooḁ enough to be tachin' ye ? "

Our brave Milesian had plenty of provocations in her service, but she kept at her post ; partly from a sense of duty and love for Mary Ann, and partly for a love of carrying out her resolves, which was no small element of her composition. It was not that she in the least minded the sweeping and dusting

and odd jobs, while the sick girl slept, or the Deacon sat with her: hard work never put Sonsie out; but she had trouble to keep her pert Irish tongue still under the Deaconess's flings: she saw so many good places for touching her up; so many flaws in her armor for her arrows of fun and sharp hits.

Here, you, Sonsie!—here's a towel to wipe your face on, and not be using other folks's; you'd best mark it with a cross on the corner, you're such a hot Catholic."

"Indade, mistress, unless you'd give it me for my own, 'twould be a pity to spoil it for yez; you'd niver get any good of it afterwards, wid the holy cross upon it!" answered Sonsie, taking the towel in her hands and examining it, while she twinkled her eyes merrily.

"Why not, pray?"

"Sure and faith, ma'am, and isn't it onpossible for the Devil ever to tetch any thing that's got the blessed mark upon it?"

"Humph! Better go and mumble some of your lating prayers and keep your sassy tongue busy."

"Thank ye kindly, mistress! I don't need to pray any more this day. I can't expect God will forgit my praying so quick as this; in particular as He knows this house needs the blessing I was askin' 'em for; but I shall say a *Deo gratias* when yer poor innocent girl gets up again, and I'm going back to Miss Ruthie, just."

As the dame had a cambric handkerchief she wished Sonsie to hemstitch, she forbore to tax her further, and relieved her surcharged feelings by a sharp box on Payson's ears instead; and then threw a black shawl over Mary Ann's bobolink, who was carolling a joyous song for his sick mistress, which sable extinguisher Sonsie quietly removed as soon as her stoutness disappeared; and then she came smiling back to her charge, and

chatted while she pulled the gossamer threads, and set the dainty stitches.

"Listen, Miss Mary Ann, till I tell you what I heard this morning while I was waiting for yer patherns: 'Tis in idle hearts,' says Miss Zoe, says she, 'that love and mischief are most nimble. The safest shield against the darts of Cupid, is Minerva's thimble.' And Miss Sabrina said, 'Amen.' Now what do you suppose it means, then ?

Though Sonsie repeated the couplet in a sing-song way, she had not lost a word ; in fact, it had been running in her head ever since.

"Oh dear ! I don't know," answered Mary Ann, sadly. "I wish I was smart, so that I could tell you all such things ; but Belle Brandon always said I was stupid, and I'm afraid 'tis the truth."

"Don't give her the breath of your two clane lips to spake her name, Miss Mary Ann !" interrupted Sonsie, with an energy of disgust, in which the thought of the treatment Jan Vedder had got at the hands of that blonde beauty, mingled unconsciously with her indignation, over the way the poor girl before her had been played upon and cat's-pawed.

"Well, never mind ; I'll try to be good and true, Sonsie dear, just as I am. You remember—oh, my dear Mr. Growing" (she held out her thin hand to the pastor), "I'm so glad to see you ! you always come just in the right time. Now here's Sonsie asking all kinds of hard questions. I never could answer hard questions ; and it is proper nice to have you to set her at— you know every thing."

The minister smiled, and listened pleasantly while Sonsie repeated her puzzle ; and he made her say the words again, and correct her accent, and untwist some of her r's ; and then he sat down and told her all about it.

"The god of love, and the god of war, and a lot of women gods besides," said Sonsie, shaking her head; "I don't see into it, at all. Sure there's but the one God in my catechism! Maybe 'tis the Holy Mary and the saints, just."

Mr. Growing rubbed his hands delightedly.

"You come up to me this evening, when you are out for your health walk, my good child, and I'll give you some books that will help you. I like girls and boys who are willing to study."

"Indade, but I will, then," replied Sonsie, with sparkling eyes. "Yer the right sort of a priest, sir. You tache yer people, and yer not the during time skleeping about the 'money, money!' like Father O'Gorman. He'll put the life out of ye — and I'll tell ye how he does it too — for smartness. Last Sunday, me mother she went to mass, and the Father, says he, 'there's a couple of collections to be took up this day, and ye must all pay up spry, or I'll call yer names from the altar. We'll have a box for the bishop and a box for meself; and it's my own box that will pass first, sure.'"

Mr. Growing laughed as much at the merry eyes of the girl as at her true story; and he fell to thinking, and Christ and Antichrist was the theme; and though he talked kindly, and left comfort and peace behind him, he was in a brown study when he rose to go. Putting on his hat, he opened the closet door, and was inside among Mary Ann's dresses before he came to himself and discovered his mistake. Then he turned about with a humorous queerness.

"You see, Sonsie — I wanted to say my prayers."

"Yes, sir," she answered, comprehending him instantly; "but 'tis in yer own closet that yer told to enter for that, sure."

Mrs. Williams let Sonsie clear up the sick-room as soon as her invalid could get out for a half-day. She took up the carpet, and made Hans shake it; and washed the paint, pol-

ished the windows, and replaced every thing in shining order ; and tenderly supported the weakness of the invalid, and steadied her tottering steps back to her own place again, where she best loved to be left in quiet with her good, strong young nurse.

"Ye'll do now, before long, Miss Mary Ann," she said. "I'll have to be gettin' back to the Horseshoe. Miss Ruth is just killin' hersel wid the work and the school-keepin'. I'll bid yez good-by this evening, I think."

"This evening ! Why, Sonsie, what shall I do without you ?" (Mary Ann's eyes filled) ; "you are such a comfort to me ; but I know you ought to go. Poor Mrs. Blair looked tired yesterday. She was walking with her head down and she would not ride with me. She will hate me, Sonsie, when she knows ; wont she ? Oh dear ! I can't bear to part with you. That boy loves you, but I love you too, Sonsie."

"Well, well ! Miss Mary Ann, I'll put in another week here if you wont take on. There, there ! don't cry, poor dear. I'm not going to Limerick anyways, you know ; and I'll run down often to you in the gloaming, and take a little read with you, and patter a fistful of prayers, or a sing or so."

"No, Sonsie ; I'll try hard to fight my selfishness. I know you desire to be studying all the while : how I wish you could have had my chance. I didn't take to learning any great. You ought to go to Rosenbloom ; it's such a proper nice place to be. *I* wasn't happy there ; but *I* was wicked. Oh, how I wish I had a pile of money of my own ! I know what I'd do with it."

"You'd niver be after sending me to school, now, would you, mavourneen ?" exclaimed Sonsie, dropping down beside her invalid, swelling up and half sobbing. Now that's so good of you !" She was as grateful as though she had got the deed as well as

the kind expression. "Well, well! there's a power of nice folks in the world, and I'll happen get me idication somehow."

But Mrs. Deacon had privately made up her mind to retain the services of handy Sonsie. Her brisk and willing hands turned off so much more work than any other girl she ever got, she hated to part with her; and she was struggling with her stinginess to make a decent offer of wages. She broached the subject at a low figure, leaving herself a margin for rise, and Mary Ann tightened her clasp of Sonsie's warm hand so suddenly that it took the impulsive Irish girl a few minutes to decide what was duty. It was soon plain, however — Ruth Blair lonely, and her weary hands full of work.

"I said to her, I'm coom to be the little mouse to yez, on that autumn day when me and Mr. Jan had the little time with Bax on the hill; and sure she needs me still, wid the heart-breakin' trouble looking out of her two sweet eyes, and the baby to mind," thought Sonsie.

"I can't leave me mistress, ma'am," she answered. "I know her ways, and I suit her; and I'll just stop on wid her."

"Mistress!" spoke up Dame Williams, in disgust. "That blacksmith's leavins don't pretend to hire a help, I hope! What wages does she pay you?"

"So much, ma'am, that I'm all the time deep in her debt."

"The landsakes alive! Well, I'm glad she's so flush. I hope she gets her money like an honest woman. Probable Blair knows why he run off and left her. Such a stuck up piece as she is! an' nothing but an or'nery school-ma'am, neither, before she got one of our hands for husband."

"Oh mother, don't!" sobbed poor Mary Ann; "you kill me. Oh, dear, I'm a drefful wicked sinner — I —"

"There, there! Miss Mary, dear; don't be talkin'. She knows, and we know, and God knows, and that's enough,"

whispered Sonsie, stooping over to arrange the sick girl's shawl. "St — st! your pa is coming up the walk. Wipe up your eyes, and don't hurt his kind heart wid yer sorrowful face. He'll stop along wid ye for a couple of hours, while I get me run."

The question of going was dropped for the present. The Deaconess tramped off to hurry up Nora, and Mary Ann obeyed Sonsie, and settled herself for a good, quiet, cheerful talk with her father. She was convalescent now, and exceeding gentle and patient. Indeed her nurse complained that she "didn't make trouble enough to pay a girl for settin' up to her." She was fond of reading Christ's life, and silently thinking about Him afterwards. She had some knitting pins, and was making table-mats, which were (she said) for Sonsie's housekeeping; but a few rounds were enough to tire her weak fingers. She had got a couple of letters from Filer, full of news about Christabel Goldsmith and praises of her; and she kept them under her pillow, and said nobody in the world was ever so good to her as Christabel and Filer (poor red-nosed Filer! the little floating teacher at Rosenbloom, where she had been so ill and so unhappy), except her own, *very own* Sonsie."

But Sonsie could be spared quite well now; and so she was going to have what she loved of all things, — a good, long walk. She had not grown thin or pale with her nursing; she had learned the laws of health too well for that, thanks to Ruth Blair's teaching and her own good sense application; and she never failed to take her exercise and her cold bath every day. The Deaconess looked sour about the use of her varnished bath-place, which, though elaborately fitted up, was kept for show; the children performing their scanty ablutions in the "sink-room," under the pump, and the Deacon getting a weekly dip at the barber's shop. His wife said she didn't "want the new oilcloth and things all nastied up with water slopping

round." Sonæie was determined; and she had Dr. Jenkins to help her; and her cheeks were like damask roses. Mrs. Eagan wanted to have her turn up her purple-black hair into a comb but she would keep it cut short; and it curled in glossy rings all around her clear, milk-white face. Among other accomplishments, she had picked up the use of Ruth's sewing-machine, and the green hood she wore was quilted from bits of silk that good friend gave her; and her blanket-shawl was a thick, warm one—she bought it with peach-meats strung on threads, for which Dr. Jenkins gave her a dime a hundred. Mrs. Vedder, somehow heard that she was collecting them, and she sent her a couple of bushels of pits. "Her people were drying the fruit," she said, "and she hoped Sonsie would make out all she needed." Mrs. Captain Slocum—Dulcet Pettibone that was—who had a fine house of her own now, and plenty of every thing, sent her a couple of stout dresses for Christmas; and the rest of her things she had gathered up in a thousand thrifty ways; and she managed to look tidy and comfortable. Mrs. Growing gave her a last-year's velvet bonnet trimmed with showy lace and feathers; and Sousie tried it on and had a merry laugh to herself before the mirror; and she lilted and danced with springing motion all over the room, greatly to Pigeon's amusement, before she put it away in her "old oak chest."

"I'll niver go fine, my blessed little dove of a Pigeon till I'm dacint," said she, hugging him, breathless and rosy, after her exercise. "Maybe, then, I'll trig up the smart velvet, wid the feathers. Till then, a warm hud becomes me best. She thrust her hands into mittens of her own knitting, as white as a fleecy cloud, and her trim feet into shoes which she got at half-price for binding, and she stepped off briskly and bright.

Sabrina Bradshaw had promised her some books; and she fortunately met Pauline and Gracie out in their donkey-cart

just as she turned off Gonecusset Street, who told her the young lady was at home ; so there was success at the end of the errand.

The building-committee came out of the new church, and Jan Vedder stopped to shake hands and inquire after her patient ; and he looked narrowly at the wide-awake girl, and begged her to take good care and keep well.

"Never fear for me, Mr. Vedder," she replied, laughing ; "I'll live to ate the baked pig at me funeral, I'm that full of health. Don't let me be kapin' yer from yer good work ; and whisper, sir — I'm minded to tell ye a good verse I heard about a kirk. I got it by heart on purpose for you. You see the folks there they begin a gret big church (much like yon that you're busy with), and they hadn't money enough to make it nate and compleate ; and they held their meetings intil it. It began to get shaky and looked old-looking ; and their minister he thought he'd read 'em a little purty hymn to set them a thinkin' !

" 'Except the Lord doth build a house,
The builders build in vain ;
Except the men do finish it,
'Twill tumble down again.' "

I hope you will stick at your house, Mr. Vedder till 'tis all o me."

"You may be sure I shall ; Sonsie ; I always pursue my undertakings till I succeed, you know. You shall sing in the choir before next June."

"Don't be talking, Mr. Vedder," answered she, turning away abrupt'y ; "I'm Sonsie Eagan, an Irishman, from County U'ster, sir !"

"And I'm a Dutchman from Rotterdam, Sonsie ; but we'll both sing in the choir for all that."

"Thru for you, sir. And, by the same token, your father

was an estated gentleman, while mine was a poor weaver, born in a shealing."

"Sonsie, Sonsie! said Jan, impatiently, "how exceedingly unpleasant you *can* be sometimes!"

She looked at him half-roguish, half-sorrowful. "Just wait till I've me idication, sir," she called out, over her shoulders, as she walked proudly away from him. They had many such bits of talk, and with similar results.

Jan's face was exceedingly sober and a little downcast after he had parted with the Irish lassie, who stepped briskly on her road, thinking somewhat about him and more about her plans for getting the idication she was so fully resolved to have.

Sabrina Bradshaw was very kind, and gave her, in addition to the books, a bunch of fresh flowers, and some excellent advice how to read; all of which kindled a perfect glow of gratitude in the fervid breast, so impressible to all emotions and so grateful for kindness; and after a burst of thanks, which made Sabrina smile, she bade her adieu and hurried away.

Down by the drive-way she came upon the gardener clipping the Irish yews; and she stopped and gathered her apronful of the slender twigs, and carried them to the Horseshoe; and begging some yarn of Ruth, she wound a crosslet and a wreath for the lonely grave in the corner of the old burying-ground, whose only mark was a rude wooden crux his widow had nailed together and planted at the head; and after a little frolic with Pigeon, who begged her to come back to him, she started again, feeling how much she had gotten out of her afternoon, both for her own pleasure and also for the ears of the sick girl shut up at home.

It was quite dark when she neared the graveyard; and the wind blew keen and sharp, and she gathered her shawl as closely around her arms as she could and safely hold her love-offerings.

She scarcely noticed a couple of objects close to the fence, as she hurried in at the open gate, nor a cord drawn across the posts, about two feet from the ground; just high enough to trip any passer's feet; and she fell prone upon her face before she could free her arms. A coarse wheezy laugh greeted her, and stifled cries of "St-boy! chaw 'em, Plug!" mingled with low vicious growling. She knew that Bax Williams and his dog were her neighbors, and that she was the victim of one of the rough jokes his soul delighted in; but she troubled herself less about the well-matched pair, than for the safety of her precious greens; and she struggled to get clear of her shawl and rise without breaking them; but, urged on by his master, whose hatred of Sonsie overcame his cowardly dread of consequences, the powerful bull-terrier sprang upon her and held her down, and seized her shawl and worried it. Sonsie felt his breath on her neck, and her heart stood still for a second. She had seen him tear down an ox and hold him by the throat till he was beaten off with clubs.

Bax Williams had never forgotten the scene at the old stumps, nor the beating he had got; and he couldn't pass Sonsie in his mother's house without curses and foulness.

"You're faster nor that old tom-cat was in the trap!" said he, clapping his hands. "Hold her, Plug! — chaw her!"

His ferocious bad tempers were warming like snakes around a fire, and he had a cruel devil inside of his ugly body. Sonsie dared not stir; for at every move she made, the dog growled and set his teeth firmer; and there's no knowing how near ~~it~~ he might have got to murder, if Rainbow and Flirt had not been out for a little stroll. Flirt knew that her friend Sonsie was abroad, although she had not seen her; and she was following her trail, her black muzzle close to the ground, and barking conversational little barks to her comrade occasionally. But

Rainbow was the first to see the Irish girl, and his eyes gleamed with green fire ; and his tail got tremendous when he espied also his detested enemy. And while Flirt dashed gallantly at the brute's throat, he stuck his nails into his flanks, and clawed and bit, and spit, like "forty cats all rolled into one," and Plug was glad to leave his hold and defend himself from the allied powers ; and the "triangular duel" began in good earnest, the two dogs rolling over in close fight, and the cat worrying the rear ; and Bax kept hopping about, bestowing kicks upon Flirt, trying to catch Rainbow by the tail, or get a clip at his head. Sonsie sprang to her feet and called and shouted at the top of her voice, clear and ringing as an Alpine horn. Though she had got a cut on her lip, from which the blood was trickling, and a bruised nose, already the size of four noses, she had no notion of abandoning her favorites, in such hands. She need not have feared for Flirt, either : Jan Vedder said she was made up of colley and Newfoundland, with a strain of mastiff blood to give her steadiness ; and she would hold on like 'grim death' when once her blood was up. Flirt was a noble creature. She despised Plug's favorite game, — flying at little dogs and breaking their legs ; but she would take no insult for herself or her friends ; and she just laid her skill to the duty of whipping the surly bull-dog handsomely ; and her stubborn endurance equalled his, while her colley blood gave her vastly the advantage ; for she put such sprightliness and variety into her attacks, that the heavy, sullen adversary was bewildered and lost his head. They were in the thick of it, — Flirt giving tongue occasionally, with her deep, mellow voice, and keeping persistently at her work, — when who should come tearing along but Jan Vedder. He was already entering Daisy Meadow, on his way home, thinking over Sonsie's last, when her clear voice cut the still air, and the pinnacle threw back the echo. He knew instinctively the tone

He remembered the first time he heard it, and the talk which had followed, sitting on the mossy log. It had changed his life; and he made speed like a champion "runnest," till, with a last spring, he stood on the battle-ground, among the combatants, and Sonsie welcomed him with a little push.

"Oh, do stop them, Mr. Vedder! make Bax call him off. My poor Flirt will surely be killed; and there's Rainbow, too — he's in it!"

Before Jan had time to interfere, Plug had got enough, and limped away, the blood streaming from his lips and one ear in shreds; and his master, seeing his plight, and the new ally in the field, made haste to sneak after him. He had had some little revenges for his whipping, such as killing off a whole brood of Spanish fowls, which had cost Jan nearly their weight in money, and poisoning a beautiful black-and-white Irish setter, whose intelligence and tricks were famous; but he hated and feared him still.

When they were gone, and Flirt sat down to lick her wounds in a most methodical and business-like manner, she turned up her bright, mild eye in answer to Jan's praise, and experienced the pleasant consciousness of having "acted well her part." Sonsie felt her shawl carefully and wiped off the slaver.

"The dirty beggar!" said she; "he's gone and put a hole into me precious peach-meat, besides trampin' on me greens."

"Better there than in your flesh, Sonsie!" said Jan, laughing. "You take the brute's attentions coolly, upon my word."

"It wasn't pleasant, Mr. Vedder. His hot breath just scorched up me courage, sir; but I came safely off, thanks to Flirt and Rainbow. You never in your life saw any thing like the way the two pitched into the wicked brute. Good dog, Flirty! come here, Rainbow, acushla! I'll have to bear you on me two arms, and let you see me set up me greens; and quick,

too, for Miss Mary Ann 'ill be fretting for me long stay. Don't hinder yourself with us, Mr. Vedder ; the two 'ill see me safe home, when I've been to me grave up yon in the still corner, and I've niver an enemy at all but the two just fled, and they've enough to-night, I think."

"But, Sonsie, I can't leave you here in this eery place. I must come along and take care of you : you are only a weak, defenceless girl. You make less of me than that dog."

Sonsie laughed. "An' is it 'defenceless,' sir? 'Tis a brave, long word ; I'll remember to use it meself. But sure I couldn't think of takin' up the precious time of such a fine gentleman. We poor girls learn to 'fend for ourselves ; though, 'tis true for you, Mr. Jan, you've been a kind friend to me and Rainbow in our troubles. Many thanks for that same !"

Jan's face clouded over. She was so independent of him — he was not in all her thoughts ; but he lifted her flowers and walked by her side, and helped her arrange her love-gifts.

It was many months before Sonsie went again to the grave, and then she dropped her flowers and fell on her knees. You would have had wet eyes, I know, if you had seen hers, so lustrous, violet-deep were they ; so full of passionate joy ; so brimming with tears which rained down her crimson cheeks. A simple crux of white marble replaced the rude wooden cross she had left, and her faded yew wreath lay at its foot ; the grave was all turfed and rounded, and a white rose sprung and bloomed from the centre, but that was — well, I must not get ahead of my story.

CHAPTER VII.

"CONFESSION IS GOOD FOR THE SOUL."

HE next morning Sonsie dressed her patient, "by easy stages," and dressed her carefully; and during all her brisk stepping about, putting things to rights, the poor girl's eyes followed her motions in meek patience; though she did not know the bit of fun which was twisting the corners of the ripe mouth she watched into such mischievous dimples, she smiled faintly sometimes through her anxieties.

Sonsie had been out gathering sorrel for the bobolink that morning; and coming into the yard, with her hands full, she stopped a moment to look at a picturesque charcoal-man, who was coming through the gate. He had given himself a fierce mustache, and brigand eyebrows, with his talley-coal, and wore his old hat with a wild slouch, and pealed out his cry in such musical tones as proved the pleasure and pride he had in his rich voice.

Mrs. Williams immediately flew at her favorite amusement,—cheapening and drawing a hard bargain; and Sonsie loitered long enough to hear the final agreement. He was to give the coal for twelve cents, put it in barrels, and *heap them up*. Going down afterwards, with her broom (which must be hung on a particular nail behind the door, on pain of death), she found the Deaconess boiling over, and scolding a blue streak. The cunning wag of a peddler had turned the barrels upside

down, heaped the heads scripture measure, and left for parts unknown, and the dame had got about half a peck of coal on each cask for her bargain; and the hearty mirth in which Sonsie and Nora indulged did not assuage her wrath.

The kind, sympathetic nurse soon forgot her amusement, though; for Mary Ann began to talk about her coming trial; and she set herself to inspire her faint heart with courage to do her duty bravely. It was a phase of character she could not understand; because *her* first impulse was always to spring to any task she saw before her, and confess and repair any wrong she had done; and a little something akin to contempt mingled with her pity for the invalid's weakness.

"She'll despise me dreadfully, wont she, Sonsie?" said Mary Ann, for the fortieth time. "I know she will. It was a proper mean trick. I'm sorry. I'd be willing to" (she turned over in her mind the greatest sacrifice she could make) — "I'd have all my hair pulled out by the roots if I could get back the minute I did it in. I would, truly. I ought to be willing to let her despise me, I know."

"Indade and indade, she'll do no such thing, Miss Mary Ann. Ye were but the handle to the shovel, anyhow; there's no occasion to feel so about it. Miss Ruthie is far too good and sweet to hate anybody, even the bloody villian of a Belle Brandon hersel; but ye needn't go just to-day, onless ye feel ripe for it; we'll drive around a bit, and come back home, if it likes ye better."

"No, Sonsie; I'll go to-day. I shall feel better when it is over."

"Yes, mavourneen, 'confession is good for the soul. Our priests tell us that, sure. They clane us of every thing, and bless us up as good as new."

"But it isn't good to confess to *them*, Sonsie. The Bible

says, 'Confess your faults to *one another*.' They can't give a true blessing."

"And they are one another! aren't they?" replied Sonsie, laughing.

Mary Ann did not feel strong enough for an argument with her sharp nurse, but she privately thought she'd speak to Mr. Growing about it, and went back to her own trouble.

"You'll stay close by me, wont you, Sonsie, and keep hold of my hand, and let me lean on your heart? You're not afraid of folks; but then you never did the awful things I went and did that time. Oh dear!"

"Miss Mary Ann!" exclaimed Sonsie, pausing with the hair-brush in her hand, and gazing reproachfully upon her weak charge, "how can ye ~~be~~ always forgetting yer promise to Mr. Growing?"

"I wont, Sonsie dear, I wont; don't be hard with me. I feel so bad," said Mary Ann, wiping her eyes. "I want to be good. I think God has heard my prayers, and I hope he will forgive my sins."

"I'm sure of it!" answered Sonsie, stoutly. "Don't it say in the Bible, up to siventhy times seven? Come, come! let me freshen ye up now, before the top of the morning is all shaded over."

Ruth Blair was gentle and kind to the penitent, and took her in her arms and kissed her; but the interview cost her a sleepless night, for she had to go over all the past,—her follies and her wrongs.

That evening Sonsie presented herself to the Deaconess. She had taken leave of her young lady, and her eyes were rather red, and her voice had not quite its usual confident tone.

"Well, ma'am, I'll be leaving ye this night. Miss Mary Ann can do very well for herself, and I mustn't stop here any longer."

"Very well : go !" answered Mrs. Williams, tartly, all her efforts to retain the girl having been unavailing. "Here's your wages,—a dollar and a half a week. I could 'a' done all the nussin' myself! Just like pitchin' money into the road! The Deacon is such a fool!"

Sonsie looked at her, and up went her arms on to her hips, belligerently.

"Good nurses get six dollars, ma'am ; and I'll leave it out with Miss Mary Ann if I am not just that ! Dr. Jenkins offered me eight to go into his hospital. It was the Deacon's self that engaged me, and I'll look to him for me pay, thankin' ye kindly for yer dollar and a half."

"Six dollars ! Six fiddlesticks ! Why the minx is crazy as a lunatic ! Let me ketch the Deacon a-stickin' of his nose into the housekeepin', I'll give him psalm-tunes, particular metre ! You just take your money and trot right off."

Sonsie looked at Mary Ann, frightened and troubled, and kept her temper.

"Don't be onaisy, mistress ; I'll not be meddlin' with yer Deacon ; though he's a kind, easy man, and he's got an eye for a bright cheek and a trim foot, if he is a deacon. I have a great respect for him, especially since I've noticed how good and clever he was to his sick girl — as tinder as a woman ; and, 'tis true for you, I know some women, not a mile off, as hard as a brickbat entirely" (her voice keyed itself up on the peculiar falsetto she always used when excited). "'Tis not a pile of yer dollars 'ud a kep me in the house wid yes, only for this dear young lady. I've done enough scrubbin' and cleanin', let alone the sewing ye got, to count off the bit and sup I've swallowed ; and Miss Mary, acushla ! yer heartily welcome to all me nursing ; and I'll come again, whiniver yez have a need for me."

Sonsie picked up her bundle once more, and left the Deacon's house, with hard words for her parting gift.

Bax and his dog were lounging at the gate.

"Good-by, Master Bax ; and sure ye'll be glad of the news I'm tellin' ye. I'm goin' to leave ye," said she, pleasantly. "But yer dog didn't fight as good as he used those times ; did he, now ?"

"Hold your blamed jaw, or I'll set him on to you neow !" was his amiable reply.

"Ah, Bax, me boy ! if dirt was trumps in your game, what a hand ye'd have, to be sure !" returned Sonsie, glancing with merry eyes over her shoulder at the slouching, sullen young reprobate, as she pushed the iron gate clanging after her.

"Au auf ! and 'tis a fine thing to know the learning !" she continued to herself. "That good shot-I got from Miss Ruthie readin' it out of a nice funny book. I *must* have the idication somehow !"

She drew her shawl close. "We're going to get some bad weather, I'm sure. Those geese jumpin' into the water an' poppin' out again are not oneasy for naught. Mary McCross's peacock is screaming hisself hoarse ; and look how the woodpeckers 'coo-coo,' as mournful as a funeral hymn ; and there goes the swallows clear out of sight. They never fly that high but whin we've got to have a storm. Sure there'll be fresh trouble up yon at the Deacon's,—that I know. I had my dream of a white-robed lady last night. I dreamt of her, before me poor handsome father was hurted ; and she came to me with a babby in her arms the day little Mally died. I followed her through muddy water up to me knees that week Miss Mary Ann was took sick ; and now, last night, she come to me again, and beckoned me to a churchyard ; and I stumbled above a new-made grave. I don't know what the trouble

is ; but I'm sure 'tis coming. Well, well ! Poor girl ! she isn't strong to fight the sorrow. If 'twas the auld dragon, now ! Small loss !"

Sonsie paused in her soliloquy, to watch a dead leaf fluttering on the tall tulip-tree before Christabel Goldsmith's window

"The lone red leaf, the last of its clan,
That dances as well as dance it can,
Hanging so light, and hanging so high,
On the topmost bough that looks up to the sky.

"Miss Chris, darlin' " (kissing her hand to the empty window),
"I thank yez for that pothry. I seem to hear yer sweet voice still saying it to me, the day when you fetched over the babby's new clothes, and showed me the maple wings. Ah ! and sure it suits me entirely to be amongst the people that talk knowledgeable. *I must get the idication !*"

CHAPTER VIII.

MARY ANN TAKES THE DEACON INTO HER CONFIDENCE.

DON'T suppose the Deacon's wife noticed much change in her daughter after her sickness. She had always been passively obedient, and her manner now was gentleness itself ; but her father was conscious of the difference ; the sick-room days and sick-room prayers took hold of him. There were times when he felt as if he could take Mr. Growing into his arms and hug him. He knew only one way to express tenderness,—to give him something ; and the chest of tea and barrel of flour which the Gonecusset por-

ter left at the parsonage were so many hugs from the grateful Deacon. He never mentioned them to his wife, however ; nor did he think it needful to speak of the thousand dollars he handed him as his church-subscription.

The warmth and glow of Mary Ann's newly-kindled lamp shed its radiance over her home and lighted up the Deacon and the children with its friendly gleam. A thousand tender actions, pretty attentions, gladdened the father's heart, and made the hours spent with her cheerful and agreeable. She brought his Bible ; and she found the hymns for him, and chose a place close to his side in the family devotions ; and though her voice was thin, and a little sharp, the weakly good man loved to hear it ; and he had to wipe his glasses, sometimes, after the tune was finished, and clear his husky throat for the prayer. Though he still wandered through mazes of uncertain English in his petitions, and " e'en a'most hoped and feared," and mangled his scriptural quotations, he enjoyed the exercise, and got help out of it. He prayed ; and I have no doubt Satan had plenty of ague-fits ; because " he trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon his knees." Not all the twitches and slaps his wife bestowed upon the helpless children, nor her loud-voiced scolding, interpolated and intruded among the exercises, could altogether spoil their comfort ; and Mary Ann soon contrived to have little Nancy's stool by her ; and she coaxed Tip to sit by his father, out of the reach of Bax and Payson ; and they were as good as kittens, and even helped out the psalmody with their piping notes. True, they strayed hopelessly from the tune and fugued rather sometimes ; and when the Deacon shut up the books and said " let us pray," there was a rush to see who would kneel first ; and they watched zealously for his " Amen," that they might spring up, exulting in their nimbleness.

Mary Ann Williams looked different too — more alive ; and she put better heart into her daily tasks ; and swept and dusted, and made pastry, and darned stockings, all in so industrious, perfect, and methodical a manner, that the Deaconess glorified herself greatly upon her system of “fetchin’ on her up.” She had a little romance — poor child ! — all to herself. Cymbalinus Adolphus called occasionally — oftener, indeed, than the Deacon liked ; and as he happened to say as much to his wife, one day, she immediately invited him out to “ice cream,” which she concocted herself, out of corn-starch and “skim-milk,” and kept Mary Ann in the wood-house, stirring, all the afternoon.

When the Deacon noticed how pleased his daughter was with the young fellow, and how she chatted and smiled, he tried hard to find some trustworthy qualities in the poor fop, with his silly conundrums, his crush hat, and his glass, which it made him dizzy to use ; but he could not like him, — and he proposed to send the girl to school for a twelvemonth, thinking to get rid of Cabby in her absence ; but his helpmeet came down sharp and told him “to stir his stumps and find out how much money old Brown was *wuth* ;” and he was forced to report thousands ; and then he was commanded to “hold his tongue and let things wag,” and more to the same purpose, but all equally choice and elegant, and as full of exquisite motherliness ; and he was glad to abandon his idea and rush off to his Gonesusset office, as to a stronghold and tower of defence.

Mary Ann had some hours of quiet happiness too. The Horseshoe was always open to her, even when it was shut to brighter folks ; and she used often to be there. In Ruth’s school-hours she helped Sonsje mend her clothes, and showed her all sorts of fancy knitting and crocheting, and the like, in which she was rarely skilful ; and they two made over gar-

ments for the little Eagans, or, as Sonsie said, "They planned and contrived, and cut up a sheet to make a nightcap."

She coaxed her father to get her some cotton from Starbird and Pedlow's and a piece of Irish linen; and she made up whole sets of undergarments for her dear young nurse, with delicate stitches, in such spirit as nuns embroider altar-cloths. She had to work very hard to get them ready for her sixteenth birthday, and in so much secrecy, as to make her feel almost guilty; but her father approved and sanctioned her, and heard all the whispered confidences about the progress, with his arm around her, his bristling beard pricking her cheek, and felt and exhibited a tremendous, though rather benighted interest in the work. Sonsie Eagan, the bright Irish lassie, held a large place in the Deacon's regard, which was presently to become larger still.

CHAPTER IX.

SONSIE DREAMS OF THE WHITE LADY.

AND they brought great stones, costly stones, to lay the foundation of the house. And Solomon's builders and Hiram's builders did hew them, and the stone-squarers squared them; so they prepared timber and stones to build the house of the Lord." And the new church rose beautiful in proportion, elaborate in finish. Mr. Growing was there early and late, directing the details, filling his soul with its beauties. And Jan Vedder and Peter Bradshaw were on the building-committee; and extremely well they pulled in harness with Captain Slocum and the old heads. They brought to the enterprise the force and muscle, and clear brain-work which

Young America is accustomed to concentrate upon a favorite project. Some of the old fogies scoffed at the idea of putting such boys among them, but Mr. Growing persisted. "You have got to leave them to fill your places," said he. "They must learn the ropes. Somebody has got to run the church" (a strict Americanism, and, like all the phrases we coin for ourselves, extremely expressive); "and you must show them how to do it." And they did; and the hearty youngsters, having exuberant health and spirits, and much surplus vitality to get rid of, showed the oldsters how to use their risible muscles, and threw in plenty of jokes and tricks along with their dispatch of business.

The Gonecussets made a desperate effort to get the site changed to their side, in the new town; but as a good deal of the money lay in Roaring River proper, and the old families positively declined to contribute in such an event, and threatened to split off and build for themselves, they had to give in; and the beautiful new structure rose above the old corner-stone, in the lovely oak grove, which was a cathedral of itself. Peter Bradshaw's energy in the good cause is easily explainable. Aside from his pleasure in finishing any undertaking, he had a dominant motive. Imperious little Zoe had fully made up her mind to be married in the new church — to be the first bride who should kneel before its altar; and it had got to be completed by the first of April, because stalwart Peter had no idea of fixing a later day for his wedding.

You wouldn't have known Jan Vedder. His eye was as clear as a hawk's; and though he still hunted and fished and tramped about the country in all weathers, the sun and wind could not keep the purple in his face nor the dark circles beneath his eyes, no longer bloodshot, which Sonsie had commented upon with more force than politeness, in her interview

by the burning stump. Sometimes he met the young, vigorous girl (who was also a tireless walker) in his free rambles ; and he would keep by her side, studying her merry blue eyes under their black brows, calling up smiles to her dimpling cheeks, and provoking the smart retorts, from her red lips, which gave so rich zest to their meeting. She would toss back her purple-black hair, which she kept in place with a green ribbon ; and in her utter ignorance of conventionalities, she gave home-thrusts and plain opinions where others stepped velvet-shod. She was intense in her nationality ; Irish through every fibre ; with pride enough for a queen, good, — honest pride, which was a safe armor. Jan polished up his knowledge of Ireland ; its history, poetry, worship, and scenery. He found he could enthrall her any time while he discoursed upon such themes. And though she expressed ecstatic pleasure in the good things he brought out,—the generous, sweet, noble traits he praised and made history verify for her,—she never cloaked her disgust and horror at the treachery and lies, the petty thieving, “ venial sins,” the drunkenness and brutality among the down-trodden Celts she knew. But though she inveighed bitterly against them herself, she would flash up and defend them from all attacks. “ It was the hardship and poverty which led them to drink ; the priests, who were always demanding money, who forced them to be dishonest — not the Irish blood which was to blame.”

Vixen and Blossom, Flora and Lion knew and obeyed SONSIE'S voice as readily as their master's. Rainbow was good friend of the whole pack, and would not rest till he had brought Miss Flirt to join the goodly company. Rainbow always manifested the greatest joy in Jan's presence ; he jumped and frisked and “permowed” around him, so that the hunter was forced to drop his boy's prejudice against cats, and accept SONSIE'S belief in their gratitude.

Jan Vedder and Peter Bradshaw studied church-architecture with the Rev. Fred, on purpose to be up in their duty as building-committee ; and an excellent steadying process it was for Mr. Jan, and the friendly association with Peter, firm as a rock and true as steel, was worth every thing to him.

There was another active helper, — a new comer in Millville, — who was, as old Miss Pettingill complained, “drefful numerous.” Next the Gonecusset dry-goods store on Bywater Street, there shone a bran new sign on the first floor window, — “*John Nickson and Co., Bank for Savings.*”

The “Co.” was a very silent partner. But John Nickson was bustling and busy and ubiquitous enough for twenty Co.’s. Captain Slocum was suspicious of him ; said his face looked “like a platter of cold victuals.” I mused many times over Mr. Nickson’s lineaments, trying vainly to trace the resemblance, but couldn’t see it. Miss Pettingill’s comment upon his prematurely old countenance, was much clearer and more suggestive.

“Law now ! he looks for all the world like a baked apple that has laid in the oven all night, don’t he ? — kinder grim and puckered up, and I’d as lieve shake hands with a nutmeg-grater, I declare for’t.”

If she had seen the four turfy, tipsy, roaring fellows, who sat around a little table in the back office, some nights, after the iron shutters were up and the place barred in like a tomb, and the whiskey bottles, and the packs of cards, and the piles of money which changed hands, she might have been able to talk more knowingly about the cause. It is almost a pity she couldn’t have peeped ; she would so thoroughly have enjoyed spreading the news.

The old ladies liked his familiar, confidential ways, — asking advice about his linen, praising their cooking. They said he was a real honest, good-hearted man. He had not been in Mill-

ville a month before he knew all the deacons and all the maiden ladies ; to say nothing of the widows and young girls. He drove a splendid pair of horses, and was fond of taking the ladies out in his handsome phaeton. Adeliza Euphemia Hitchcock had showed her elaborate toilette there, several times, and Susie Jenkins, and Irene Bisbee ; and the maternal Hitchcock was more than pleased with her new acquaintance, and told "Adelizy Euphemy" "she might go down to Starbird and Pedlow's and get all the cotting cloth she wanted right away — to make up for herself again time o' need."

The turnout was often standing before Deacon Williams's gate, and Mary Ann dressed herself under her mother's directions, as Lady Jane Grey got her parental training ; viz., "So sharply taunted, so cruelly threatened ; yea, presently, sometimes with pinches, nips, and bobs ;" and the banker found her rather a silent companion, though she did her best to be obedient.

He had been invited to take tea with Mrs. Captain Slocum in her new mansion, who was especially fond of entertaining company and thoroughly enjoyed her housekeeping ; (rare creature !) and he often walked arm-in-arm, or as Sonsie said, "linkin' him," up Gonesusset Street with the Rev. Mr. Grow- ing. Deacon Mc'Cross said "for his part, he was thankful to have a man who would take right holt."

His get-up, in dress-coat and white vest, when he joined the church, "upon profession," were much spoken about amongst the sisters, and his primrose kids, and patent-leather boots ; and they wiped their eyes and blow their noses when he gave in his experience. There was something truly touching in the piety of the owner of those horses. And to hear him tell his feelings ! (in rather horsey English, some of them). Adeliza Euphemia could with difficulty control her emotions.

Mr. Nickson was a large stockholder in a gold mine called

"the Sprightly," and had flaming statements on his desk, — "barges so much, coal so much ;" and a map of the tract, showing the necessary river running through it ; and he kept a sample lump, which he was fond of handling before men's eyes. He never asked anybody to take stock, but he talked it up with a vast amount of enthusiasm, and explained the power of "our mills," and joked with the deacons and solid people about the plans of benevolence he should set afoot when the gold began to roll in ; and stated positively his expectations in a fat whisper which sounded rich. The bonds and shares were on crisp bank-note paper, and looked handsomely suggestive, with a beautiful copper-plate engraving in one corner, of a miner surrounded by his tools, and in the other a furnace in full blast ; and wagons jumping the ore, and countless bags, tied up for delivery, and great gold figures all over the face, dealing largely in ooo's, which were convincing enough in themselves to make a man feel rich in the mere handling.

Esquire Hitchcock couldn't keep his fingers off some ; Deacon Williams took a few shares ; and John Bisbee bought a bond ; and Widow Goldsmith sent for a statement, in order to examine it in the privacy of her bed-room ; which she did, after finishing the seventy-third chapter of the "great tribulation," her favorite portion of Isaiah, — "But thou art cast out of thy grave, like an abominable branch," etc., and her prayers.

The most successful investment which John Nickson made in Millville, and which brought most savings to his bank, was a Sunday-school enterprise among the Gonescuset operatives. It took amazingly. All the young people enlisted as teachers, there seemed to be a peculiar fascination about these sharp-witted, wide-awake young Celts, which kept up an intense interest in the work. The superintendents of the regular schools complained that the teachers felt no interest in their civilized

scholars ; and indeed the regular routine of verses and hymns was rather humdrum when compared with the lessons given through peril of life and limb, when the scholars came trundling their hoops up the aisles, and introduced remarks upon the personalities and attire of teachers, taking off their manners and gestures with witty penetration.

Mr. Nickson hired a hall in the centre of Millville ; fitted it up with a melodeon, and benches ; and hung colored prints on the walls, — Abraham in a green shooting-jacket, standing on the steps of a two-story mansion, with a veranda all around ; and Sarah in the door wearing a mob-cap, and surrounded by scoloped flower-pots : the Twelve Apostles in the seven primary colors ; and some gay maps. He always led off the singing, in a voice like a roaring wind ; and chose the most rollicking tunes in the "Censor." The boys, said he once gave them "Landlord, fill the flowing bowl !" the hymn being adapted to the air of that popular drinking song.

Sonsie Eagan offered herself as a teacher ; but Mr. Nickson after a stare at her plain apparel, very nearly turned up his nose at her.

"Do you suppose you can interest our boys ?" asked he.

Sonsie had recourse to her favorite attitude, which she was trying very hard to forget and cast off.

"And who do you suppose can come so near the poor fellows as an honest girl, that has suffered and sorrowed the same as them ? You stand off and order them to behave themselves ; I put meself by their side. My heart beats wid their hearts. I know how it feels to be a desolate wanderer. And it's you have the face to ask me if I can *interest* the Irish boys ? bad luck to ye, for a thin-blooded Yankee !"

Mr. Nickson was not especially pleased with Sonsie's manner of putting things, and turned the cold shoulder to her most de

cidedly. She was sorry the moment the words were poured out, and made haste to array herself in humility as in a garment.

"I beg yer pardon, sir, I'm sure, for speaking all the true things, as I have. I don't ask to be let tache the gret ones; but there's plenty of little fellows I can help to read and spell, as I was helped once meself."

But the banker had no intention to accept her services; and he gave her a look, along with his refusal, which made her blood tingle, and her fingers clench together; and she walked off gazing at him over her shoulder. Mr. Nickson repeated the interview to Jan Vedder as a capital joke, and, to his astonishment, Jan took it up seriously, and gave him very plainly to understand, that unless Sonsie Eagan had her wish, he would drop out of the enterprise, and added a statement of the exceeding respect he entertained for her, which the banker received with a leer and a dig in the youngster's ribs.

"Sly dog! you know what you are at, I'll be bound!"

Jan was so angry, and showed his disgust so plainly, that the banker pulled on a long face; and shifted his ground directly. He privately believed Jan to be a hypocrite; but as he had just attained his majority, and was likely to become a purchaser of some "Sprightly," shares, he handled him carefully. He felt sure his fingers were itching for the speculation; he had had several talks in the private office, and heard all about it; and the banker had tried to get him to take a cigar, and failed. Jan said he had left off smoking; but he was interested in the subject, and must be nursed. And so Sonsie Eagan was teacher, and worked in school and out, among the small ragamuffins she tried to make "true Irishmen" of; and the banker was a little afraid of her, she was so sharp-sighted, so earnest and straightforward. The quick-witted, old-headed boys complained that the young gentlefolks came to the mission to flirt with each

othe; more than for any interest in their welfare. But Sonsie, sitting with bent head, and crimson cheeks, in the centre of her class, whose eyes never wandered, after they were once conquered came in for no such accusation. Mary Ann Williams astonished Mr. Nickson, by her persistence in sitting next Sonsie, and consulting upon ways and means; and he feared she had a taste for low society, but smiled to himself as he reflected how easily he could break *that* up, or any other habit or inclination she might possess, if he made up his mind about her. The poor girl hesitated to undertake the task of teaching, but when he waited upon her and urged her, as he expressed it, "to come over to Macedony and help us," Mrs. Williams ordered her at once to go, and examined her dress with as much frowning caution as when she went to drive by his side. She was thrust into his company remorselessly; but she worked with faithful zeal, and, by help of Sonsie's strength, she got a degree of enjoyment out of it.

"Miss Mary Ann," said Sonsie, one day, when they were sitting over their sewing, in the Horseshoe, "the Lord forgive me for backbiting, but I believe that Mixum is a hypocrite and a murtherin' villain!"

Mary Ann shuddered, and made no reply; and Ruth gently reproved Sonsie for her out-speaking.

"Judge not!" said she.

"No, Miss Ruthie, I wont. The Lord's work will prosper in spite of him. But I will just say, if that auld blackgard hadn't had the luck to get a human body, when they was bein' given out, he'd have crawled upon his belly for a pizin snake. Ah, wisha! if good Saint Patrick had but a set his holy foot on him!"

"You wont find many of your opinion in Millville. The

folks all say he's a proper, nice man, and dreadful pious. I hope they're right, I'm sure!"

Sonsie looked keenly at her quondam patient. She had dropped her work, and was pulling nervously at her shawl-fringe. Poor girl! she was longing to confide to her two friends that she was afraid of the banker; that his horny hands made her flesh creep; that his winks and jockey-talk were repulsive to her; that he squeezed her arms, and nudged her with his elbows, and was generally unpleasant in their drives; and she dared not complain any more to her mother, who told her, "Girls mustn't be so squeamy as to mind these little things when they was a coortin'"; and that she feared and dreaded the husband they were trying to force upon her. But she did not tell it; she went and leaned against Sonsie, and hid her face, and cried a few quiet tears, and went away to her home with a dread of her future aching at her heart. She had no idea of disputing her mother's will, or resisting her arbitrary disposal of her happiness. She would not trouble her father with her fears, but smiled on him, and kept watch over his wants, and prayed more than ever.

Sonsie looked after her walking down the street with bent head, and exclaimed,—

"Tst! tst! there's trouble coming for that poor creytur. I'd my drame again yester-night, of the white lady, wid a mite of a baby on her breast, and Miss Mary herself followin' after her. I believe it's all along of that Mixum that her sorrow 'll come. She can't be much worse off nor she is now to home for certin, wid the auld dragon to plague her life out; but God help her, if they give her to yon black-hearted man! I seen him, this very mornin', kickin' his horse till me blood boiled inside me; his poor damnation dog sneaks out of his way if he

but looks at him ; and to be his wife — the holy saints pity us ! ”

“What, Sonsie ?” exclaimed Ruth. “What kind of a dog ?”

“Sure that’s what they name ‘em, Miss Ruthie ; the black and white fellows, who trot neath the coaches. We used to call ‘em plum-pudding dogs to home.”

“Oh,” said Ruth, “Dalmation.” Sonsie, that was a fearful mistake.”

“So it was, Miss Ruthie ; but listen till I tell you a story of one I used to know. The boss weaver had a plum-puddener, who used to take his two pennies to the bake-shop to buy his bun, and the rogue of a baker put him off wid a burnt one ; and he got mad about it, and talked it over with a friend he had in the stable ; and the next day a gentleman gave him two pennies, and he trotted off and dropped them down before the kennel where his friend was tied ; and then he set too and gnawed apart the rope and let him free, and each one took a penny, and off they went to the shop ; and as soon as the man offered him a bun he drew back his lips and showed the money between his teeth, and trotted to the door, and waited till his friend did just the same thing. And then the pair of ‘em barked, and jumped, and leapt for joy, and went over the way to another shop and got their dinner.”

“A very good story, Sonsie ; but you must be careful about names, or people might think yours a case of premeditated profanity.”

Mr. Nickson and the Deaconess had got “very thick together,” and were laying pipe and pulling wires to accomplish a favorite project ; viz., to get rid of Parson Growing, whom they could not manage. They had sounded the Rev. Dr. Perfect, of Nansook Junction, and ascertained that he was open to proposals, desiring a larger field of usefulness, and a fatter salary. Mr.

Growing, pondering many things in his mind, had laid up the anonymous letter, and kept his own counsel ; and abated nothing of his many labors, nor ceased from his fervent prayers. The wish of his heart, his favorite project, was speeding well : and he looked with pardonable pride upon it ; beautiful within and without, a temple of the living God. It shall be said, to the credit of the Gonescusses, that they were public-spirited men, who did nothing by halves. The new church, Jan Vedder had facetiously named "The Church of the Holy Speculators," and some other wag the "Holy St. Roofus," witnessed ably for them ; and liberally were they seconded by Roaring Riverites. And they did all the work, and took all the trouble ; standing over the stone-cutters, hurrying on the carpenters, and piling up their subscriptions as the work grew on their hands. Any talk of curtail or cutting-down was ruled out at once.

The discontented faction would have liked to be rid of Mr. Growing before the dedication ; but he was not a resigning man ; and he turned a deaf ear to hints, while his work was in progress. His heart was heavy often, but he never flagged.

CHAPTER X

"MAD DOG!"

BAX WILLIAMS, with his shoulders all humped up, and his nose as blue as a whetstone, was kicking his heels against the post of the big gate which gave entrance to the stable yard. His hands, as grimy as usual, were stuffed deep in his pockets, and his old fur cap was slouched over his ears. He seemed to have a sniffing cold in his head, and drew his well-polished sleeve across his nostrils, at intervals, and was stuffy and wheezy in his breathing. He was evidently waiting for something to turn up.

Two or three days previous, Jan Vedder had lost a valuable horse, which was found at the bottom of a deep gulley, with his fore legs broken, and had to be shot to be put out of his misery. Though Jan suspected that Bax had something to do with it, he had not been able to bring it home to him, and could only discover that he had been seen sneaking about the "up pasture," where Mandrake was kept, and which was separated by a snake-fence from the deep ravine, all rocks and boulders, at the bottom of which coursed a creek. Bax was turning over in his thoughts, how Mandrake had come up to his box of salt; how he had examined the lure with many snorts and sideways prancings, and short races, after he had apparently quite settled his opinion of the edible, and made up his mind to partake; and he, Bax, had managed, with infinite trouble and patience, to fasten the sharp bits of tin to his handsome long tail, which

hung to his heels fine as silk ; and he could see before him, the frightened, wild eye and red nostril of the beautiful beast, when the sharp goads struck his flanks, and remember the run he made for dear life, and the frantic dash over the fence, and the rattling of the loose stones, and the look of almost human despair when he rose to the mad leap. Everybody taxed *him* with the deed, but he hadn't let it out. He felt cowardly fear of Jan Vedder, he was so persistent in tracing out things ; he wished he had dared to go down to the maimed creature and pluck off the goads, after he was disabled. He did start ; but the groans and sobs of agony he had to hear were too terrible, and he crouched back and ran away as fast as he could.

He was waiting ; and his meditations were so extremely unpleasant that he kicked viciously at a stray pig, who was grunting along, with his nose to the ground, and aimed so well that piggie ran squealing off on three legs ; but still he didn't feel any better.

Plug had deserted him, and gone to his lair in the stable, and lay with half-shut eyes, uttering a dismal howl occasionally, as he got up and turned around, and poked about in the musty straw for a fresh place. Plug was never especially vivacious, nor good-natured ; and as for play — fighting was the mildest form of recreation he ever indulged in. His muddy white coat was splashed all over with unsightly scars, from the shower of coals he had got one night, when Belle Brandon fell down and the fore-stick parted. His blood-shot eye looked more savage-ugly from the black patch it had, and his ears were still sore from the wholesome correction Flirt had bestowed upon him in Son-sie's defense. A chief cause of Bax Williams's present disgust of life arose from the fact that Plug had refused to be set upon a starved kitten, that very morning, and gone and plunged his head into the horse-pail instead. Indeed, for a week, he had

been snappish and growly ; seeking for hiding in out-of-the-way places ; pawing at his throat, as though he had swallowed a bone. Bax was hanging about the stable-yard with a double purpose, — to wile away the time in Hans's refined society, and keep out of his mother's sight. He was playing hookey ; having got a flogging at school the day before, for putting a mouse upon the red-hot stove, in the morning, and so prolonging the miserable little wretch's sufferings as to cause one tender-hearted, timid maid to faint dead away. There had been a scene about it ; and he gnashed his teeth when he thought of the teacher. He would have liked to poison him. Dame Williams had vigorous muscles ; and she still plied the raw-hide upon the person of her eldest boy, in such fashion as to make him roar for mercy, though he often showed fight in the course of the discipline ; and the curses and foulness he launched at his fond mother were enough to make your flesh creep. Hans had been a sailor, and was a rough-tongued fellow ; and his sea-tales, were not choice ; but they pleased Bax, who had a dim notion of running off to sea some day himself, — especially cherished and dwelt upon after a severe beating. He was learning to use his fists, too, from Hans ; but that accomplished sailor had gone down to the smithy with one of the horses, and prolonged his stay. A companion for Bax heaves in sight, and he begins to whistle, — a colored waif, a boy and a brother, whom nobody owns, and who lives nobody knows where ; and has nobody cares what for his fare. He also has a dog ; who skulked at the heels of the wretched outcast, as if ashamed of his allegiance, — an ugly mongrel, half-bull, half-cur, all scars and bruises, and as lean and hungry as a wolf. Bax was quite fond of this waif's society ; and they frequently stole apples and poisoned cats in company. I don't know, either, as Bax was very much to blame for his choice of friends ; the

good boys who thought much of themselves, got their lessons, and wore clean linen, would none of him. His home was but a house of bondage; bare of pleasures, barren of comforts; where, as Sonsie said, "the children only stayed round the edges." No chequers, no dominos allowed; pop-corn and molasses-candy tabooed, and all frolics and sporting punished as crimes.

"Hillo, Steve! Where'd-ge git s'much dorg?" Bax called out to the shambling waif.

"Mebby I found him, mebbly I stealed him, and mebbly he was gi'n to me. You needn't speer no questions; nuf for you to know he's a bully fighter, and'll lick yourn all to blazes if you dast to trot him out."

"Lick him! you git out! If you want to save up that there ugly fellow's hide, you best pucker up them blubber-lips double quick and whistle him off, cause Plug'll chaw him up in about three chawks."

"Bet ye this ar jack-knife agin your new fish-line on it, if you dast to, — come now, there!"

"Oh, well, if you want your yaller dog chawed to bits, 'twont take more'n a minute; fetch him on! Here, Plug! Plug!"

Bax whistled and called, but Plug declined to appear; didn't even prick up his ragged ears; and his master went into the stable to haul him out by the collar. Coiled up in a dark corner; digging at his mouth; the ends and shreds of straws he had been chewing sticking about his lips, mixed with frothy saliva; he snarled and snapped, as Bax took both hands and tried to drag him forth by main force. His tongue hung out, swelled and slimy, and he stuck out his paws and hung back, looking choked and bewildered.

"What's the matter with that 'ere dog? — he can't swaller nothin'."

"Swaller! — you hold on, — he allers chaws 'em first."

Bax was put out by Plug's unusual backwardness, and cuffed and kicked him savagely.

"What's he got onto his mouth, — all that 'ere white stuff?"

"Oh, never you mind about his mouth. That's all right, as you'll find out pretty soon, and your yaller dog too!"

Steve sat down on the ground, and took his cur between his knees and began to pound his head and tweak his ears, and point out Plug as a bitter enemy; and Bax stood behind the sick brute, he held by the collar, and maltreated him, and tried various methods for arousing his courage, in vain; for he dropped sleepily in his tracks, with his tongue out, the moment he was left to himself.

"Stir! ye blasted sneak, or I'll get a club to you!"

Bax dug his fists into the dog's hot nostrils, and he opened his filmy eyes, and made a snap at the boy's hand, and set his teeth into it, and the bones crunched in his grip. It was hard work to get it away from him, and Master Bax howled and yelped with pain and rage, and looked about for a weapon.

The brute staggered up, and set off on a blind run down the road, with his tongue out, and greenish foam dropping from his lips.

"That 'ere dog is mad!" said Steve, in a scared whisper.

"He aint mad, nother, no more'n you's mad yourself! Dogs don't go mad in winter-time!" yelled Bax.

But he turned ghastly white beneath his freckles and dirt, and dropped the axe he had seized in his brutal fury.

"I'll bet a puppy on't! Folks best keep out of his way, I tell you! I'll foller to his heels, and find out anyhow, 'fore he bites somebody."

Steve started full trot, keeping close to the fence, ready to escape at a minute's notice. Plug went down the road in a

straight course, heading toward the open country. Just at the corner of Proddy Lane, he met Hans riding home from the smithy, and snapped at the horse as he passed, who shied out, and so escaped his death; and Hans, who had taken several drinks to beguile the waiting, came near losing his seat, and was much put out, and explained his feelings to the animal in thick Duch-English and random blows. Plug had gone laboring on, straight through a flock of geese who fled squealing in all directions: he kept the middle of the road, and ran blindly, heeding nothing.

Sonsie Egan had a basket on her arm full of turkeys' eggs: she was going to try her hand at raising some poults, and had been over to Mrs. Captain Slocum to get the eggs and the directions; the first, she paid for in knitting, and the second, she received with many thanks, though she knew very nearly as much about it as her slim little teacher; being carefully observant of every thing which came under her keen vision. Dulcet, though a thrifty, careful housekeeper, would gladly have presented the eggs to Sonsie; but that lassie had ideas of her own on the subject, and was positive.

"I can hold up me head higher, ma'am," said she, "if I pay me way."

The Captain looked at her, and thought she held it plenty high enough; but he gave tongue to one of his pealing "haw-haws," and remarked, —

"Quite right, my girl! Independence *is* about the ticket; out, you see, Miss Slocum she likes to hold her head up too. and *she* can't unless she squares her bargains handsomely for all she gets. And, by the way, Sonsie, I've got a pig, — I've got lots of pigs in fact, — but this little black feller is an orphan; his mammy died and left him, Sonsie, to squeal alone. 'His hope is cut off, and his tail is as a spider's web.' I'll make

him over to you, Sonsie. He's a dreadful responsibility, and he draws too much upon my sympathies. You shall take him, and fetch him up carefully, and I'll pay you for your kindness. The apple-parings, and pumpkin-rines, and sich, that you have over there to Miss Blair's, 'll fill up his skin as sick as a mitten; 'for who can eat, or who else can hasten hereunto more than he?' and when he's fat, I'll buy him of you."

Sonsie's eyes twinkled. The oddity of the statement tickled her sense of fun, and she readily consented to adopt the orphan. So she was taking home the turkey's eggs, and thinking how Dennis should build a pen for the black pig who was an orphan, when she was overtaken by a tall, well-made fellow, with a soft hat stuck sideways on his head, a game-bag slung across his back, and a Sharp's rifle over his shoulder; his legs were encased in hunting-boots, whose red tops reached half-way up his thighs; and his long strides brought him to the side of the young girl, whom he greeted with very manifest pleasure. Sonsie Eagan had the deep interest in Jan Vedder which a warm-hearted woman always takes in a man she has tried to benefit, and she was proud of him, too, in a curious, far-off way; she loved to hear people say, "What a fine fellow he was! what a hunter! what a fisherman! what a good worker!" She told him the pig story, and he laughed heartily.

"Why, Sonsie, you'll come to be a real farmer before you know it. I've got a poor heifer, who is a lone orphan, you had better take her, too."

"Thank you, Mr. Vedder; but Miss Ruthie, she's got a fine cow of her own, and the two faymales mightn't agree."

"But, Sonsie, how are you to feed your bonnie black pig? You'll have to let me send you some corn."

"Oh, no, indade, sir; potatoes are cheap; and me mother had a fine crop."

"Raw potatoes! why they'll ruin piggy's digestion!"

"Very well, sir, then I'll boil 'em, jest till he'll tuck 'em in wid his fate."

"Jan laughed, and lifted his rifle to his eye.

"I've a great mind to pepper that young buffer," said he. "I gave him a dollar, not an hour ago, to buy coal for his sick mother, and there he is stealing wood off the Deacon's pile."

"That's for the kindlins, sir — sure he can't light ary fire wid-out kindlins," said Sonsie, half in fun and half in earnest. "This is God's world, anyhow. 'The trees of the Lord are full of sap, the cedars of Lebanon which he hath planted.' Yon ragged boy is God's creature, and it does seem, he's got the right to be warm in his Master's world as much as you, Mr. Vedder."

"Rather fast morality, you're ventilating, for a good little Irish girl, and a Sunday-school teacher at that! isn't it Sonsie?"

"Oh, well, rise up in your own place, then, and help build a home for the poor children; do your share to putting an end to their sins."

"Sonsie, you make me think of a story I read in the paper this morning. A fellow who stuttered, said to an Italian, 'C-c-c can that p-p-pup parrot t-te-talk?' And the answer he got was: 'Suppose an he no can talk so moche better as dat what you can talk, I chop him dam head off.'"

"Ah, ouf! If you worked half as well as I speak, you'd be good for something," returned Sonsie, coolly, noways disturbed by Jan's whimsical application of his story, of which she relished the fun.

"I should love to go fishing," said Jan, as they skirted one of the sparkling little brooklets, rushing over its pebbles, which not the silver fingered ice-god could quite subdue.

"There, Mr. Vedder, how'd they taste?" said Sonsie pettishly.

"What taste?"

"Why the words you took out of me mouth. I was jest going to speak those very thoughts."

"That accounts!" replied Jan, smacking his lips; "sweeter than honey in the honey-comb. I never got such a charming flavor from any utterance in my life. Come, we'll go out and spear pickerel by torchlight this evening; you'll enjoy that, — the red flaming light, the dark moving figures, and the profiled shadows. It will fill your wild Irish soul full of poetic fancies."

"Oh, yes! in course I could like such a pleasure, but I must stop at home and pick up some idication out of the books Miss Bradshaw has been so good as to lend me. I am not a drone in this awful gret beehive."

Jan turned the talk cunningly, though he felt the thrust: he got plenty of such.

"Did you ever hear of the river Liffey, Sonsie?"

"No, sir; but it sounds like a nice honest Irish river, sure."

"It is: it runs through county Kildare, and at Seixlip, not far from Dublin, a very high cascade is formed, something like Petri-fying Spring, you know, and the waters tumble over a great sharp rock. "*Leimen-Uradane*," is the name of the fall, which means "Salmon's leap." They say that when the salmon tries to go up the river at that place, he leaps, holding his tail in his teeth, in order to pass the rock, and if it is not spry enough he falls into the baskets; which the fishermen place to catch the clumsy ones."

"That's a mean way to fish," said Sonsie, — "taking advantage of the poor fellows; but 'tis a nice little story. I seem to see the clear water dashing, and the mossy rocks. Tell me some more, Mr. Vedder."

"I'll read to you, if you will walk a little slower."

Jan took a small volume from his pocket, where he had craftily hidden it, in expectation of such a request.

"This is a book written by a very learned man, named Good. He was an English priest, who passed many years in Ireland." (Jan reads).

"The Irish are witty, warlike, and remarkable for the just proportion of their limbs ; their flesh and muscles are so supple that the agility they possess is remarkable. They are a nation greatly to be praised for their strength of body, and for a greatness of soul. They are prodigal of life, hardy in bearing fatigues, cold, and hunger ; courteous and kind to strangers ; constant in their love, and in their hating also ; seldom forgiving injuries, too credulous, greedy of glory, quick to resent insults."

"Very nate!" said Sonsie, with her head up. "And now what does the reverend father say about the women?"

"I don't see anything *in particular* about the women, Sonsie ; the description I read you includes them, I suppose ; but Sir Francis Head tells us, "there is in the Irish female countenance, an innate modesty more clearly legible, than he ever saw it in any other country."

"That's true for yez, sir. Ye might say it and tell no lie at all."

"I could say it of one Irish girl I know, at any rate, but I'm afraid she's not pure bred : these are the native or pagan Irish of whom I have been telling you ; but in the north, there is a strain of Spanish blood. Perhaps that's where you got your black hair, Sonsie. It is a matter of history that Spain and Ireland were close together, in the old days when Spanish galleys rode the high seas ; and anybody who has been about Galway, knows that through all Connemara, there are plenty of Spanish remains, both in dress and feature, and much architecture that is purely Castilian. Lynch's Castle, for instance, that I tramped over, has wide entrances and arched galleries ; stone mullioned

windows, and outside staircases ; mayhap you're no true Celt, after all, Miss Eagan, with your beautiful brogue."

Jan paused for the roguish, merry rejoinder he expected ; and was startled when he caught the look in her deep eyes. She stopped dead still, and laid a quick, light grasp upon his arm, — a proceeding which astonished Mr. Jan, for she was exceeding fond of keeping her hands to herself.

"Look ! Mr. Vedder — look !" said she, in a low, clear, voice ; there's a horrid sight. Plug ! — mind — he is shtreelin right on to us !"

"Great God ! Sonsie, that dog is mad ! run for your life ! fly, — over the fence with you !"

Before he had finished speaking, two little children, — a boy and a girl, — turned out of a cross-road, and came, laughing and kicking the loose snow and red gravel before them. They had a basket of pears swinging between them, and each a bag of pop-corn in the other hand. They were Daniel Proddy's twins, who had been on a visit to Grandma Proddy, and were carrying home the spoils. Plug, with laboring breath, was upon their heels, scattering foam from his protruding tongue.

Sonsie screamed and put wings to her feet. Seizing one under each arm, it was the work of a moment to drop them over the fence, and seat herself on top of it ; and it was time too, for the wretched brute was not two yards off. He snapped his teeth together as she darted off, seeing some object dimly through his bleared eyes.

"Bang ! a lightning flash from Jan's rifle ; the ball lodged in the dog's forehead, and he dropped in his tracks, stone dead. Jan threw down his gun and took the carcass by its great brass collar, dragged it into the roadside ditch, and threw a couple of rails over it, carefully avoiding the bloody froth which was oozing from its mouth ; and Sonsie produced the speechless twins

from their retreat, and wiped their eyes, and after permitting them to take a fearful look at dead Plug, she assured them they would meet no more mad dogs (probably), and set them safely out of harm's way, before she and Jan resumed their homeward route. Her heart thumped, but she said, coolly, —

"How lucky, Mr. Vedder, that you and your rifle, the pair of ye, happened to be on the road just now! and tis, a good shooter that ye are too. I think I shall begin to be looking out for you as a matter of course, pretty soon, when I'm in the trouble — 'tis three times that you've helped me already."

Jan looked eagerly at her, hoping to catch a deeper meaning than the sound gave him, but he looked in vain: the stir and life of the adventure were shimmering over her, but nothing beneath it.

Passing Deacon Williams's pretentious stable, they saw Bax sitting in the door holding one hand clasped in the other, looking sullen, and scared half out of his wits. The horse in the stall whinnied for his absent mate. Whether Hans had stopped for more drink, or come to grief through what he had already imbibed, he had not yet arrived, and Bax was alone with his dread trouble.

"I've shot your dog, Bax!" called out Jan, as he came up; "and lucky I did, too, before he bit somebody; for he was stark, staring mad!"

Bax uttered a dismal howl and dropped his head cowering upon his hands.

"What's the matter wid ye, Bax? Don't be sorry after the dog, — he had got to die; and he died aisy: just one pop! and all over. It couldn't be helped; he would have done somebody a mischief. What if he had bit you, and gave you the hydrothoby! You ought to thank Mr. Vedder for getting you shut of the beast, instead of bellowing like a silly calf."

Bax lifted his head, and showed them his scared face, full of agony, and his hand all purple and swollen.

"Was it his teeth, Bax?" asked Sonsie, turning as white as death, as she went close and examined the wound. "Don't say 't was his teeth. Oh! you poor, poor boy! The Lord have mercy on your soul? Oh, Mr. Vedder!"—she turned instantly — "there's not a moment to be lost!"

"A moment! there's not an instant," answered Jan, starting off on a quick run. "Get him into the house," he called back to her: "I'll have the doctor directly."

"Oh, Sonsie Egan! Oh, Mr. Vedder! Don't leave me! Have I got to die? Shall I be dead to night? Oh, dear! I can't die! I'm afraid! Mebby he wouldn't 'a bit me if I hadn't cuffed him round so. I'm scared to death! What'll mother do to me? I wish I had a went to school. I'll allus go arter this. You stay with me, Sonsie, wont you? I didn't mean to trip you up that time. Ohoo! ohoo! how my hand hurts! It's turning black! I'm dying! Ohoo! ohoo!"

"Be quiet, Bax; never mind tellin' them lies now. Come along wid me," said Sonsie, taking him by the sleeve: "I'll wash the blood before the doctor comes. I'll stop by ye, in course, if I can do you good. Come, pluck up! be a man, can't ye?"

"Sonsie! Sonsie!" cried out Jan (he had met the doctor, and came back breathless), "you haven't a scratch on your hands, have you? Be careful how you peril your precious life!"

"Nary a scratch, sir; sound as a hazel nut!" answered she, holding up her fingers, spread wide, while he anxiously examined them. "Never be thinking so much about me, Mr. Vedder; this is plain duty, anyhow."

A second time Sonsie Egan was installed as nurse in the

Deacon's house, from whence she had been twice ignominiously thrust forth. The Doctor said it was clearly providential, and pointed to nursing as her vocation; and Mary Ann came and hung on her neck, and whispered, —

"How good of you to come, Sonsie dear! Oh, Sonsie, you must stay and help me; this is fearful! How do you suppose it will end?"

Mrs. Williams talked loud, and tossed back her cap-strings and spread herself.

"Fudge! I don't b'lieve nothing at all about the dog's bein' mad! Here 'tis winter, and as cold as Greenland! I'll whip the young dog's skin well, and trundle him off to school!"

And as if her say so, could make it so, she went on scolding, — abusing the Doctor and Sonsie, and threatening her boy, — till the Deacon came in breathless, his knees knocking together. He get hold of Sonsie's hand and squeezed it, while he gazed with half-bewildered eyes into her good face, trying to draw comfort from her strength and truth, and he kept muttering, —

"It's a blow, isn't it, Sonsie? The hand of the Lord is upon us, — as you may say, in a manner, seemingly, — fear, and a pit and a snare."

Doctor Jenkins finished his examination, and burned out the wounds with caustic, and left the boy still dead with chloroform on the sofa; and beckoned Sonsie out into the hall.

"Come here, my girl! He put his fingers on her pulse, and took her chin in his hand, while he peered into her blue eyes. "Plucky, and steady, and quiet! You will do your duty here, as you always do it; without noise or fuss. I wish more nurses like you were to be had for love or money. I fear this poor lad has got to go. You must stay where you are for the present. I had rather you had not washed the wound, Sonsie,

remember next time. I believe it only dilutes the virus and sends it more easily through the blood. Burning out is better; but" (he shook his head) "on his naked hand, you see! nothing to clean off the poison before the fangs entered the flesh. I incline to the belief that there is electricity in the fatal influence, which requires the presence of a fluid conductor; for if a dog's teeth are wiped by passing through clothing, no evil effects follow. In some terrible manner, the spirit of the angry beast seems to be infused into the victim like inoculation; and it is absolutely certain that the virus is resident in the saliva, because the disease has been communicated by the mere touch of a mad dog's tongue upon a healthy wound; and in cases where the sores have been healed, and no evil results have followed, *anger* will cause the old wounds to flush and throb in unison with the rage of the bitten person. I should like to show you my authorities, Sonsie; you would be much interested in reading up the cases. How the whole nature of the dog can be changed so as to charge its bite with deadly venom, is a mystery, and how the saliva can communicate death to other beings, is also a mystery; but then we are a bundle of mysteries, Sonsie; unless the constitution is poised so as to receive the poison, it will not work, even as vaccination refuses to take effect in some systems; and it is a curious fact that light-haired people are more susceptible to this dreadful malady than dark-haired ones. Bax has got red hair. Well, well! we'll do our best, and leave the event; our best isn't much, either. If you've anything to call you away; any arrangements to make with Mrs. Blair, you had better hasten them. His eyes followed you as long as he could see anything, as if you could save him. What is it in you that has such power? You *must* be a nurse! God made you for that! Poor Mary Ann is hardly strong enough for this trial; her weak nerves were dreadfully shattered by that slow fever!

Three or four days ought to show us where we are. You seem to be the one to hold this family together in its troubles; so make haste. It *may* pass over. I've known cases, where the wounds healed, and months or even years elapsed before a seizure; I depend entirely upon you. That woman has no more idea of nursing than a dromedary of playing the flute. Her daughter would be rotting in her coffin to-day, if she had had the handling of her. There she goes! wiping up tracks, with a scowl on her face! I wish I had brought in a bushel of mud on each boot! The trouble and the dirt of the thing are all she thinks of. Maternal instinct seems wanting. You run right off, Sonsie, child, — you've got your orders, — clip away, now!"

"I'll do me best, Doctor Jenkins, — I always do!" said Sonsie, stoutly. "I never was any gret friends wid Bax Williams, but if I can help or aise him, I'm ready, I'm sure. But, Doctor, can't you pull him through? Sure he's the taste of a dirty lie yet on his tongue. Oh, cure him up, and let him git a chance to behave."

"I'd gladly do it, Sonsie, if I had the say; but no cure has yet been found for this dread disease. I say *found*, for I believe there *is* a remedy for every ill that flesh is heir to, if we could only hit it."

"Well, well, Doctor! if he has to go over the dark river in a hurry, I believe he'll happen get a chance on t'other side; they'll consider the home, and the hard times, and the aulc draggon of a mother that he had, and start him again."

Doctor Jenkins placed his spectacles, with a finger either side of his nose, and looked queerly at the girl thus boldly launching her belief among "the planes of being," without anybody's leave.

Max remained quiet the rest of the day, in a half stupor; and

Mrs. Williams kept about her energetic housekeeping. She was making soap, and tarried near the cauldron ; testing and weighing, intent upon producing a prime article ; and the Deacon, browbeaten and warned off, by her repeated loud-voiced declarations that 'twas "nothing but a tempest in a teapot ; the scamp was as well as anybody, — she'd have him off to school in the morning with a halter round his lazy neck !" went back to his office, and tried to enjoy his profits.

For the next three or four days, the boy was much the same, not inclined to stir. His mother talked about a whip, and his father hoped he only got a cold ; his breathing was thick and wheezy, and his eyes were very red ; and his young nurses took turns in reading to him and telling him stories. Sonsie had used plenty of soap and water about him, and he looked quite nice in his clean linen, and neatly brushed hair ; and she persisted in getting him into his Sunday clothes through much tribulation. A softening, humanizing influence was in the sick-room, and seemed to melt into him with the atmosphere of tenderness which surrounded him. His thoughts were busy ; and he had fearful times of horrible dread of the future, which it took all the moral strength of his two helpers to control. He manifested intense curiosity about the next life, and listened attentively to the Bible accounts of the New Jerusalem coming down from God ; and Mr. Growing was steady and judicious in his visits and teachings. It needed careful going over the ground, before he could take in at all the notion of a Saviour. Mary Ann, weak and inefficient as she was, helped him often unexpectedly. She had travelled the road so recently, and knew all the sloughs and fearful places, and she was emerging so surely into the clear light, and joy, and peace that Christ bestows upon his own, that her simple words were "nails in a sure place." Never did this zealous young pastor so

thoroughly fulfil the duties of his mission as by the sick bed: his words were inspiration; his tones, winning sweetness; his prayers, wings for the suffering soul.

One evening, after Mary Ann had been singing to her brother, he lay looking in her face, and reached out and took hold of her hand.

"You're a real good sister, Mary Ann," said he. "I e'en a'most wish I could get well so as to have some good times together. It seems ever so long that I came up to this room, don't it?"

"Not very long, dear! Maybe God let you suffer a little, so that we may love each other more."

Bax shook his head.

"Folks most generally die when mad dogs bites 'em. I know Plug was mad. I shan't never go out o' that ere door till put into a coffin."

"Don't talk so, Bax, dear! You may get well,—I hope you may. The Doctor says your hand is healing, and he wants you to take nourishment and try to have an appetite, and get strong. I'm going to read to you out of *Esperanza*: shall I?"

"No: I want to talk now. Are you going to heaven *sure*, Mary Ann?"

"I hope so, dear," she replied, meekly.

"And you too, Sonsie?"

"Yes, I mean to, if I can; and I expect to," spoke up Sonsie, in her brisk voice. She was stringing melon-seeds for a pair of fighting-cocks, which she intended to amuse the sick boy, and he watched her bent face full of will, and her glossy curls and crimson cheeks, a while before he spoke again.

"Do you suppose dogs and cats and horses and such dumb creatures 'll be there?"

"I don't know about that, Bax. I've thought a deal of it me-

self. It does seem that the fields of living green would look empty like, wid niver a four-footed thing running around, as much as wid no singing-birds in all the beautiful trees, and goold and silver fish leppin' and skepplin' on the clear rivers; and besides, I don't see how the poor sufferin' things is to get paid up for all the hard knocks they get here, if they don't have an other life somewheres. Yes, Bax, I think they'll all be there."

"I hope I shan't meet Rainbow, anyhow, Sonsie. I've been dreadful mean to cats and dogs and sich. You see, mother, she used to be so mean to me, and I paid it off onto them. I wish't I hadn't. I wish't I had hadn't plagued you, Sonsie; you didn't ought to come and stay with me."

"Never mind that, Bax. There! ain't that a broth of a rooster! look at his red flannel coomb, all notched out! he's a real shang *high*, ain't he? Now I'm going to toast you a nice bit of bread for your supper, and I've a pot of go for jelly that Deb gave Miss Ruth o' purpose for you. It came all the way from — oh, ever so far away,"

"Don't go yet, Sonsie. I want to tell you something. I killed Jan Vedder's horse Mandrake. I should like to see Jan before I die. As like as not the horses and things 'll all talk over there, and just the minute that colt sets eyes on me he'll fly at me and blow me up; I know he will. It was *so* mean of me. How he did groan, poor fellow! I'm awful sorry, Sonsie. Wont you ask Mr. Vedder to come and let me ask his pardon, and forgive me before I die. Tell him I'm going to be a good boy now, will you Sonsie? he'll believe *you*."

"Indade, then, the boy wont need any new start on t other side, I'm thinkin', if he goes this pace," said Sonsie, wiping her eyes as she walked away.

As the days wore on, the heavy dread which hung like a pall above the watchers, lifted invisibly; the deep scars remained in

the boy's flesh, — a white cicatrice surrounded by a livid band ; and the little finger hung powerless ; the tendon was severed, and small atoms of bone had worked out of the wound ; but no fatal symptoms appeared. He had a low nervous fever ; and was easily excited, with spasms of trembling and wild weeping, after which he sobbed himself to sleep upon Sonsie's breast like a grieved child ; and for hours together he lay with half-shut eyes in a sort of stupor, from which he impatiently refused to be roused ; and he saw wild sights of prancing horses, and packs of dogs, coursing free among his native hills, who looked fixedly at him with their still eyes ; he trapped fierce animals whose savage faces grew human and made him shudder, they glanced so vindictively upon him ; but these things, the Doctor said, might be a part of his fever ; and he was trying a new treatment, which he watched narrowly.

Fourteen days had crept by, and Bax was paler and thinner ; he begged for water and drank eagerly, holding, clutching the glass in his trembling fingers. And Sonsie kept ice about his head, and the palms of his hands ; he lay with wide open eyes, which mechanically followed the floating motes, up and down, up and down, and his tongue was dry and purple. He talked by fits and starts, with his young nurses, of every thing he had done and suffered in his short life, and they comforted him.

" Sonsie," said he, "there's a whole lot of Dorkings out in my hen-house that I didn't ought to have. I good's stole 'em of Chris Goldsmith, and I want you to take and keep 'em for her." Then he told how he had become possessed of the fowls, and begged her to entreat Chris to forgive his many injuries to her. He went laboriously over his misdeeds and laid them bare to her, and fastened his eyes upon hers while he asked if she *really* thought Christ would be his Saviour. Another day, he could no longer swallow ; and then the painful paroxysms began to come

on, the raging madness ; he was lashed to the bed, and his fearful struggles were horrible to witness, and his half-choked animal howls were enough to blanch the cheek. Sonsie stood close to him, never flinching, and wiped the viscid foam from his purple lips, carefully burning each bit of linen she used.

In an interval of quiet, he whispered to her, laboring to be understood.

"I'm going, Sonsie. Thank good Mr. Growing for all his prayers. I think I see Jesus ; I think he smiles upon me ; I've been a dreadful boy ; so cruel ! so wicked ! He knows all about it ; I've told him ; but I think he'll take me home, and let me rest, I'm so tired — so tired ! Mr. Growing said Jesus loved me ; I guess he does ; I hope he does ; I'm *sure* he does. 'Over the river,' Sonsie, sing it please ! Come, Mary Ann, you sing it too. I'll be on the bank, all ready to meet you when you come. I think *you* wont be long after me, sister. I seem to know it, somehow ; and you'll be glad to get into the beautiful city. It is all peace and sweetness there, isn't it ? no quarrelling, no scolding. Where's the children ? Fetch them all with you. We didn't have much comfort together here ; but we'll get it over there ; and I'll begin to be a good brother to you. Jesus is going to teach me how. Oh ! I wish I hadn't been so bad, but it can't be helped now. Everybody has forgiven me ; Jesus is smiling ; his face is so sweet, it rests me to have him look at me. Dear Jesus ! he loved children, didn't he ? he was a child once himself ; he knows all about it."

He sank back exhausted, and closed his sunken eyes, and the Doctor took Sonsie aside.

"The time is short now," said he ; "you must be strong and quick ; save him all the suffering you are able. Here is a sponge, and this is chloroform. Put it to his mouth, when he begins to rage. I shall have to leave you for a little ; old Mrs. Pettibone

is worse ; their man is waiting for me ; I'll look in again as soon as I come back this evening."

After a long stupor, Bax roused again, and his poor purple lips, which he had bitten and torn in his agony, worked slightly, as if he prayed ; then he opened his dim eyes and reached up his arms, and Sonsie and Mary Ann put each a hand into his burning palms.

"Sister, will you wear black for me?"

"I don't know, Bax," replied she, glancing timidly at her mother, who stood leaning over the foot-rail.

"Of course !" she spoke up, in her strident voice ; "we all shall."

"Father !" said the boy, turning instinctively away from her, and making the request to his gentler parent, which he had been turning about for days in his disordered brain, — "Father, I want Sonsie to wear black for me ; she'll mourn a little, I know, though I have been mean and spiteful to her. Oh mother ! mother !" he moaned, "if I could only try it again, I would be a good boy. Don't be hard upon the young ones ; let them have a good time ; and maybe they'll live to be a comfort to you. I wish I hadn't knocked them around so."

Payson threw himself down by the bed and buried his head in the clothes, and the Deacon put his hand upon him, with shut eyes, through which the big drops trickled down his cheeks.

"Are you sure Jesus will take me, Sonsie?" said Bax, suddenly, as a cloud darkened his new-born faith. "Oh Mary Ann, will he?"

She bent over him and whispered,—

"He took me dear, and I had sinned longer than you. He is all love and tenderness ; trust him ; he died for us, you know."

"Good-by, father ; good-by mother ; I shan't never play hookey any more. Oh dear, it's coming again ! how many more

do you suppose I'll have to bear? Quick, Sonsie! help me! hold me! — no, don't! stand off! all of you; I can't breathe! I might — hurt — you!"

Before Sonsie could apply the sponge, the froth was dropping from his bruised tongue, and his eyes were set in the death agony. In an instant he sank back motionless: his sufferings were over: he was gone!

CHAPTER XI.

SONSIE GOES AFOOT TO THE BURYIN'.

MRS. DEACON WILLIAMS was fully alive to the duties which devolved upon her, and dispatched them with bustling zeal and business promptness. She had the house furbished up from top to bottom, and all the furniture set out at its best, and every grain of dust carefully removed. Even the bureau drawers and presses had to be laid over.

"As like as not, some of em 'll be peekin' in while we're gone to the grave. Old Miss Pettingill is a dreadful curus critter. I heard she said she never see a house so full of good things as Miss Bradshaw's, — such piles of linning, and blankets, and cotton cloth, and coverlets, and counterpins, and every durn thing. How'd she know, if she didn't peek into the closets and chists? 'Tain't no ways likely they went reound and shown em to her!"

As for the poor father, he was quite overcome, and grieved sorely. He and Mary Ann stayed in out-of-the-way places, mostly by the bed of the dead boy, where the still form was covered, white and cold: they two read and talked low and

prayed together. It was Mrs. Williams who sent for Mr. Plantum to take charge of the funeral, and she gave him minute directions.

"A rosewood coffin, silver plated and lined with white satin.' And she chaffered over the price and screwed him down to his lowest figures. She sent for the floral gardener, and ordered the bouquets and crosses.

"You needn't spare no expense. Put in plenty of big flowers, — camelias and sich ; and be sure and fix 'em strong, because I intend to have 'em skelatated *afterwards* and put into gilt frames. Miss Vedder had her'n done in Toptown after her husband died, and they say they're butiful — every bit as nice as pictures to hang onto the wall. So you may have 'em *jest* as costic as you've a mind to ; they wont be lost."

This was the dame's first funeral ; and she meant to make the most of the occasion. When anybody called, she shook hands, and looked solemn, and said, —

"We shall expect to see you to our funeral."

Sonsie overheard Mary Ann pleading with her parent, that she, Sonsie, might be allowed to ride by her side in the carriage, and couldn't help listening for the reply.

"Whist ! now, till ye hear the auld dragon !" said she, with her head up, like "Eve listening at the fountain," and she was no ways discomposed or astonished by the Deaconess's characteristic rejoinder, —

"Not by no means ! if anybody is let in, 'twill be Mr. Nickson. I think some of sending him an invite to ride along of the mourners ; that Irish huzzy 'll stay to home, and mind things (I must say she's trusty), and she'll keep folks out, and help get the supper for the folks. I expect Sister Ramble and Galusha Sackrider in the noon train, and brother Balaam and *his* wife. What should *she* want to go to *our* funeral for, I'd

admire to know. Get out of my way : I want to see how my new mournin' frock hangs. Go right up and try on your bonnet. I wonder if them jets 'll be becoming to you. I think I will ask Mr Nickson — step along !”

Mary Ann ran into Sonsie's arms, as she left the maternal presence, with her handkerchief to her eyes, who hugged her heartily before she let her free.

“ No — no ! mistress, don't ye be throubled,” said she, as she stepped briskly about her work. “ I'll go to the poor boy's buryin' ; he'll be lookin' for me to be there, and I'll not be the girl that 'll disappoint him ; and he hardly settled and to home yet in his new place ; but I'll go on me own two futs, jest. He was a poor mistreated fellow ; and I'll say a couple of prayers, just an *Ave* and a *Pater*, forninst his coffin, and drop a green sprig upon it for the sake of old Ireland — and to please him. Now ye know well enough, Sonsie, that he's gone straight to the good house, where there's many mansions, hisself ; and nor prayers nor masses nor vespers can't better him ; and 'tis for the poor father and the sister that ye'll make yer devotions.”

Captain Slocum said Mr. Plantum had a keen nose for a funeral ; he could smell one afar off as the “ war horse snuffeth up the battle ; and he dressed his face in gloom and his lank person in black garments, after he had finished his arrangements, — the camp chairs, the ebony table, the black pall, the showy coffin, the crape for the bearers, the carriages and best hearse with the white feathers, and he stood prominently in the hall during the prayer, and wept copiously into his white handkerchief. The picked choir he brought himself, and paid them, and carried them away after it was over. One Universalist, one seventh-day Baptist, a basso from his own establishment, who also hired for the French horn and clarionette on circus days and general training, and a travelling soprano, who

was stopping at the Milville House, waiting to appear in Burlesque Opera in the evening.

Mr. Growing was present, but did not conduct the services; that duty being assigned to the Rev. Dr. Perfect, of Nansook Junction, who was sent for on purpose. The Deacon and Mary Ann didn't know any thing about it till they heard the unfamiliar voice in the great parlor; and they clasped each other's hands, and sought each other's eyes with a dumb sense of injury.

When the last prayer was over, and the people had been assigned to the carriages by Mr. Plantum, who read their names from a paper he held, the young pastor stood quietly waiting, with his wife on his arm, till the last one slowly left the gate; and there was plainly no provision for him. He quietly dismissed her with a few words; and, wrapping his cloak about him, he walked on toward the open grave. He was soon joined by Sonsie, and he conversed pleasantly with her in unruffled composure.

Jan Vedder had been going back and forth all the morning on the Deaconess's messages, to such an extent that she felt her importance wonderfully increased by the interest he took in her affairs, and tossed off her black ribbons and ordered him about in her domineering "head-up" way; but Jan lost his time and trouble, for he saw nothing of Sonsie, and learned nothing of her place in the funeral train. He had his own horses in waiting, and when he espied the couple of walkers who "talked by the way," he came trotting up to them and insisted that they should take places in the carriage. Sonsie refused plumply.

"I'll go on me two futs just, to this buryin'," said she; "ye may say that and tell no lie at all, Mr. Vedder, thankin' ye kindly.

Mr. Growing, after a quiet smile at her stubborn air, refused

also, and Mr. Jan, disgusted with the whole thing, wheeled about and went home. "By the gods of Valhalla!" said he, "that girl is right, as she always is, though so confoundedly provoking."

The people in the carriages talked of the crops, and the weather, and the election; and the women commented upon the appearance of the bereaved family in their new morning, and discussed Mrs. Williams's management of her children, and related anecdotes of the dead boy, which bore rather hard upon her maternal tenderness.

Mrs. Deacon Proddy and Mrs. McCross were in the same carriage, and comforted each other with scripture and appropriate hymns.

"Why should the rich despise the poor —
Why should the poor repine?
A leetle time will make 'em all
In equal friendship jine."

Upon which Mrs. Proddy heaved a deep sigh and responded, "I know it, Mrs. McCross, jess so; life is but a span. Drefful comforting hymn that is! My dear good first husband, that's dead and gone, used to breathe it gently on the organ to the tune of Windham; yes."

Zoe and her mother were shut in with Dick Walsingham and Pauline Bradshaw; and Mrs. Vedder was scandalized by the way these two restless children pointed out the objects of interest on the road, and the amusement they drew from various sources; and finally Zoe exclaimed, out of all patience,—

"Do, Dick, put up your handkerchief to your mouth, if you will persist in looking out of that window with such a cheerful grin on your countenance!"

As the first shovel-full of earth fell upon the coffin, Sonsie drew near and dropped a tiny crosslet of yew upon it, right

above the dead boy's heart, and stepped back as easily as she had approached, and was lost among the other people.

Mrs. Deacon Williams said she felt Baxter's death deeply and she was extremely particular about her mourning. I never heard that she regretted any of the beatings she had given the poor lad, nor the times she had led him to school with a halter around his neck ; but she told her acquaintances that he was the child of many prayers, and she had no doubt whatever as to his future state.

I don't know as it was in the least owing to her, that the young Williamses had a better life, but they certainly did, for Mary Ann went softly and spoke kindly to them ; she gathered them together, and read to them, and her father watched her in silent delight, and often joined himself to their company. Somehow they were all drifting away from the stout well-to-do mother, into a higher, brighter atmosphere. The poor creature could not see it, she was so busy with her muck-rake she felt no inspiring presence in her household,

CHAPTER XII.

"KISS ME, RAINBOW."



SONSIE EAGAN'S work was done at the Deacon's, and she was at home with Ruth Blair again. She was getting experience of life every day ; and she pondered many things in her heart. Sonsie was fond of placing herself in the position of the people about her, and saying to herself, "Now how would I have done that time ?" and her conclusions and decisions were very nearly just.

The Deacon took good care to carry out Baxter's wishes in the matter of the mourning, and Sonsie had just received a box full of dresses and aprons, a simple black hat and cloak, and a couple of pairs of nice gloves. She turned them over with pleasure, the good bombazine the strong merino, and the two gingham: they were Baxter's gift, and she prized them highly. She put on the bombazine and walked up and down the room, looking at its trail over her shoulder. It was the first one she had ever worn, and she smiled at herself as she stepped. Now something queer happened, which you must believe, for it is strictly *true*.

Rainbow was lying on the lounge, with his head in his paws, and the third or fourth time Sonsie paraded past him, he got deliberately down and joined her. Walking by her side, he trailed his great mottled tail on the carpet, and looked at it, over his shoulder, precisely as his friend was doing her long robe. Sonsie watched him a while in silence, and then pounced upon him and covered him with kisses.

"Ah, Rainbow, me boy! did you think I was too vain? Well, perhaps I might be; but, you see, I haven't worn mine so long as you, acoushla, dear!"

Pretty soon Jan Vedder came in, and he could hardly take his eyes from the red and white comeliness of the fresh young lassie. She told him the story, and tried to put Rainbow through his paces again, but he provokingly refused to "en-core" the scene, and lay down and frisked among Pigeon's nine-pins instead; and when they were quietly seated, he leaped upon Jan's shoulder, and purred vivaciously. Pretty soon Sonsie came, passing swiftly by; and stroked him, and said, "Kiss me, Rainbow," and he put up his mouth as sensibly as folks, and seemed thoroughly pleased with what he got.

Alien bloods (sayeth a wise man) develop strange currents

when they flow close to each other, with only the films which cover lips and cheek between." Though, the sweet, wholesome face was so close to his, Jan did not dare to put his lips to it, as he might audaciously have done, without stopping to think, a few months before. He had learned some lessons since then ; and it was but an instant and no more, before she had withdrawn, and sat bending over her new hat, in deep thought, the other side of the table.

Jan put down the handsome Egyptian, and walked about the room, touching the books and Sonsie's knitting with uneasy fingers. He had a proposition to make, and hardly knew how to form it so as to be safe ; though he had turned it over in his mind so often that it was all clear there as sunshine.

"Could I see Mrs. Blair this evening, do you think, Sonsie ?" he asked, after a little.

"No, sir ; she studies in her room at this hour, and I must not interrupt her, and I must be after studyin' my lesson itself. Oh, Mr. Vedder, I get much discouraged those times." She heaved a deep sigh. "Idication is like going up a ladder : every step I take there's so many long ones ahead of me. I think I'll never be aught but a poor, ignorant girl at last !"

"What's the trouble now, Sonsie ? I thought you never despaired ! You are certainly the bravest girl I know ; but you need help, of course."

Jan felt as if a way was opening for him to introduce his proposition, still he would not spoil it with hurry ; so he added, —

"What is it, Sonsie ? Perhaps I can enlighten you."

"Just this, Mr. Vedder : Mr. Growing gave me this purty book" (showing him the *Pantheon*). "It tells all about the by-gone times, when people worshipped Jupiter, and Mars, and Neptune, and the gods of the trees and the streams (we used

to call those ones kelpies and faries to home); and I asked him what was the old religion of Ireland before they had iver a Pope, and he said it was much the same as these in the book, and the priests were called Druids; and I wanted to know more, but I didn't like to ask other questions: ne might think me troublesome."

"I can tell you all about that, Sonsie!" said Jan, sitting down enjoyingly. The crafty fellow was constantly reading up Ireland, so as to be posted upon the diverse points on which the young emerald sought information; and he had to keep tolerably busy, too, for she cropped out in all sorts of unexpected places.

"Ah! that's nice of you, Mr. Vedder; let me get me sewing, till I listen."

"I can't see the particular use of it, Sonsie; but they say all knowledge is profitable, and so perhaps this will do you some good. The Milesians, that's the ancient, or pagan Irish,—whose origin was traced back by their bards to Milesius; and back of him to Japhet and Magog,—adored Jupiter, Mars, and the moon, and the winds; and, in fact, pretty much every thing that was stronger than they, or which they could not comprehend. They had a good deal of learning. Their alphabet was named entirely from trees; because the Druids, who lived in the woods, thought the trees were the best and most powerful products of nature. They called it '*Beith-Luis-Nion.*' *Beith*, means birch-tree; *Luis*, wild ash, and *Nion*, true ash; and their alphabet, in English, reads: birch, wild-ash, alder, willow, ash, white-thorn, oak, hazel, vine, ivy, elder, fir-tree, heath, aspen, and yew,—and there are two more which nobody knows any thing about, '*Peth-bock* and *Timme.*' The priests and bards were the great folk in those times, as they have been ever since, especially the priests, whom the old Milesians called

Draoi, or Druids, and they governed the people as well as sacrificed for them. Laogare, who was king at the time of St. Patrick, always swore by the sun and wind; he had a remarkable stone, ornamented with gold, which gave oracles, — answer to questions, you know. Different nations have endeavored to find out the origin of the word Druid: the Germans think it comes from Dru, which means faithful; the Saxons from Dry, which signifies magi; the Milesians got it from Dair, which means oak; and I think that is the prettiest derivation, at all events; for their island abounded with towering forests of the acorn-bearers, in the solemn seclusion of which the Druids celebrated their mysteries. They are not, by many, the only ones who have held sacred the oak, and its mistletoe. In Greece the priest, dressed in white, used to climb the tree and sever, with a golden knife, the clinging vine, and give it to the people to cure their ills; and certainly there was one use they could make of the good strong ones which was finishing and complete."

"You mean hang themselves, sir. Sorra, a bit of a cure is that! Dyin' isn't the end at all! oh, no, we've all got that inside of us that teaches different."

"Oh, well, you mustn't interrupt me with theological points now. Some day we'll take up the 'to be or not to be' for a question; but I'm going to tell you about the deities, — I've just got to it. Beul, he was one, a rich god who owned land and had his sacred fire, and his sacrifices, and his golden calf. He was adored (says the learned Abbe McGeoghegan) till Christ came, and we know that the same fellow is much adored nowadays, especially by the women, in the form of dollars and cents, diamonds, laces, and so on.

"They used to eat each other in those times, Sonsie; lucky you didn't open those blue eyes of yours beneath some Druidical oak; the fairest and prettiest young girls were the vic-

tims ; and there is a story of a nurse, who fed her little princess on children's flesh to make her strong and beautiful."

"Ah, auf! I don't believe that tale, anyhow. No true Irish girl would do such horrid things," said Sonsie, who had forgotten all about her sewing, and was listening with eager eyes and parted lips. "But whisper, Mr. Vedder, sir, — what ever did they wear those old times?"

"True woman!" said Jan, who was enjoying himself hugely, and reckoned the hours well spent which he had devoted to acquiring useful Irish knowledge. "The men went very finely dressed: they had a tunic, and drawers, and leggins, and boots all made of one piece of leather, and as tight as could be; and outside, a purple cloak; their hair and beard unshorn swept their shoulders and breasts, and they had high peaked caps for their heads, and on their feet sandals, — just a sole, you know, — tied on to their big toes and ankles with many strings. A most admirable and becoming attire, Sonsie; I'll originate it for our next fancy party, and you shall be lovely Edna, the charming spouse of Ollan Folda, the stubborn."

"What might that be, sir?"

"A very modest raiment, Sonsie; no anklets, nor bracelets, nor nose-jewels, nor wimples, nor crimping pins, nor tablets; but a short mantle of cloth, to the knee, worked and fringed over a petticoat; and their fildeath or headdress, a long strip of white linen turned spirally around their heads, and tied into a vail behind; their hair platted and intertwined with ribbons. You must let your shining tresses grow, young Edna, for our party."

"Miss Zoe'd be lovely in that dress!" exclaimed Sonsie, with enthusiasm. "I thank ye kindly, Mr. Vedder, and could ye lend me the big book that tells all about it, till I read for meself? There must be plenty more idication in it yet!"

Jan was a little confused by this direct reference to the source of his information, and had no idea of permitting her to ship in bulk, what it afforded him so much delight to dole out by instalments.

"Sonsie, the black dress you have on becomes you rarely ; never mind going back to Ollan Folda's Edna for a costume ; one of his yellow gold chains around your neck, with a little Paris watch in your belt, would be a nice finish, wouldn't it ? and a great convenience beside. Every lady ought to have a watch."

"You think so, indeed ! Well, mayhap you are right, but I'm *not* a lady, only a servant at this present time ; and I shall keep a good watch over me behavior, Mr. Vedder, — that's all the watch *I* need for now ; thank ye kindly for your unspoken thought, sir."

Jan blushed.

"It was no unworthy thought, Sonsie ; nothing to feel shame for. I don't know what to do with my money. I don't care any thing about it either, if it can't be of use to those I — like. I do wish you would be reasonable, and let me invest a little of the circulating medium for your good. Come ! say I may place you at school ! There ! it's out now ; hang it, there's no use in beating about the bush. I see how you thirst for learning. I invite you to drink your fill. I'll fix it with the spring owner's ; all you have to do is just to sit down on the bank and ladle it up ; and, seriously, Sonsie, you need feel no obligation to me, because you know you can take the money as a loan ; and repay me after a while ; teach, or write, or paint pictures, ahem ! I'll take your notes, and I'll promise to wait any length of time — ten years, if you say so. Lord bless you ! I shan't be in any hurry !"

Jan covered his face for an instant, passing his hand over it,

and coughed slightly, before he met the eyes of the young girl, who dropped the work she had picked up again, and darted a keen look at him. He returned it without flinching; and the two kept silence a moment.

"You are true and honest, this evening, Mr. Vedder, and you are varee good. I honor you for the kind intent: it does ye credit; but, ye see, it is onpossible."

"I don't see it at all!" replied Jan, eagerly. "That sort of thing is done every day. Rich men choose so to spend their loose cash; they fit young girls to take care of themselves, educate them for singers, painters, sculptors, and teachers, and the good girls work very hard, and they earn a great deal of money, and they do good with it; they educate their young brothers and sisters, it might be Dennie or Mystie; and they take care of their old mothers. Yes, indeed!"

"But suppose they don't succeed? suppose they die before the time comes? they die in debt. I couldn't die in debt, Mr. Vedder."

"Look here, Sonsie, you've no right to go back on your own words, — 'If you had made me the offer as a true man that has money to lend might have made it to a poor girl, I'd have taken up with it, and blessed ye for it.' That is just what you said, *verbatim*. Now I do make it, look at me! can't you read the truth and honest purpose, that prompts me to beg you to accept a loan from me. I have it; you need it; let me lend it to you."

"Mr. Vedder, I was wrong to speak those words. I didn't know it then, I know it now; and you must leave asking me; it is onpossible."

"Sonsie! what an unpleasant girl you are! so stubborn, so unreasonable! I should think anybody as sharp as you, could see the force of a strong argument better. If I was an old gray-

beard, you would not be so silly. I wish I was as hideous as the clauricawn, who mends his brogues day and night, under the shadow of the cow-thistle, with a purse of gold in his pocket; then perhaps you would listen to reason, and act for your own good."

"I don't, then, Mr. Vedder; I shouldn't take the pleasure I get now, in looking at your bonnie face, like a gleam of God's blessing."

Jan started, and put out his hand to grasp her's; but sank back again, as she said, with modest, bold firmness in her blue honest eyes, —

"I don't see me way clear, sir, to any such idication; and till I do I can't step safely. Yer just wastin' yer breath," and she shook her head half sorrowfully as he opened his mouth to begin again. "'Tis no use talkin', sir; ye may drop it, or we will be bad friends for sure."

"You might learn a little music, at any rate, Sonsie, — the Irish harp, for instance! In old times the Milesians excelled upon that, 'they struck harmoniously the strings of brass, with their fingers in sweet, quick accord; they drew melody from discordance.' Wont you have a harp, Sonsie? You might venture that much in my debt. I think I'd wait till you'd earned the money, travelling, you know, and playing beneath the people's windows," said Jan, teasingly. Poor fellow! he was much provoked, and out of patience, with the small ground he made.

"Thank you, sir!" she replied, in unruffled good temper; "I travelled wid a broom when I was a slip of a girleen, barefoot and often hungry. I know more about that life than a gentle man who slept in down and dined famously those times, could iver be tellin' me. I'd that sort of travellin' enough to do me for a lifetime.

"What if we two were to see the world a gypsyin'!" Jan

rose ; tossed back the spools he had been building tottling towers with, into her work-basket, and stood before her with his chest out and his head up, and his cheek and eyes fired by sudden emotion. "I'd keep the purse and carry the pack, and you should sing your wild Irish songs, and twang the harp-strings. I could tell you some tales of a life by the hedges, under the ripe sunshine, careless and free, which would bring the violet into your eyes, till you should feel these Yankee trammels, chains intolerable and you'd long for the wood-quest singing in the sweet meadows, and such freedom as the Bohemians of the world enjoy. I wish I could cut loose and live that way with you, Sonsie. I'd willingly leave society behind me."

Sonsie sprang up, and not too soon either ; for the young fellow was fast surrendering himself to a dream of love which shut out reality, and responsibility, and stern duty, and knew only her for its source of joy.

Sonsie felt indignant at his folly ; but beneath her indignation there was the faint tremble of an emotion which quickened her pulses and kindled in her face. It was not love, — only the glimpse of a possibility ; it just fluttered and vanished before Jan had time to catch its glow, — Jan who was a little ashamed of himself for deviating from the plan of action he had marked out ; and she lifted her blue eyes, clear, positive, and confident.

"And will ye be gone now, Mr. Vedder ?" asked she, as Jan picked up his hat. "Well, good-evening, then, sir ; I'll ne'er forget yer kindness."

"Yes, Sonsie, I'm going down to the bank to talk up gold stock ; or, no, I believe I'll go and have a game of chess and a bit of German with Mr. Growing. I need some solace for my disgusting disappointment."

He smiled as usual, at her, as he shook her hand. "I'll bring you some Irish songs next time I come, for your harp, — 'Sha-

mus O'Brien.' He was a lucky fellow, that Shamus. I wonder if the lassie's name was Sonsie."

He looked teasingly merry, and so fresh and frank and kind, that the young girl felt thoroughly proud of him.

"He's a raal gentleman!" thought she. "I'm glad I spoke to him those times; I'll keep on speakin' as often as I see a place to do him any good. He'll be a fine strong man, too; he's getting bonnie and busy, every day; and whether he likes it or no, he can't help owing some of it to Sonsie Eagan, 'the crossing sweeper.' She stooped and picked up Rainbow, who had followed Jan to the door, and politely seen the last of him. "Yes, Rainbow, we've done the air of Brookedge good, the purty pair of us; haven't we, me boy?"

CHAPTER XIII.

A BOTTLE OF HARMONY SHERRY, AND WHAT CAME OF IT.

ESQUIRE HITCHCOCK and Mr. John Nickson had a long talk over a bottle of Harmony Sherry, and finished the wine while just in the interest of the conversation. So they broached another bottle, and before it was emptied, the Esquire had bought some of the "Sprightly," stock, — which he had a perfect right to do if he felt a call to make a fool of himself; but he also let out a secret, as his tongue got loose, — a confidence intrusted to his keeping which should have been as sacred as a penitent's revelations at the confessional; and Mr. John Nickson knew as much as he did about Deacon Williams's will. Insensible block, not to comprehend that he had thus helped Adeliza Euphemia to another chance of single blessedness and

made of no effect all her tea-drinking, her piano-playing, her Casta Diva's, and display of housewifely accomplishments, — all her energy and zeal in the Mission School.

Mr. Nickson had been some while saying to himself, —

“How happy could I be with either,
Were the other dear charm away,”

and using his wits to discover which of the young damsels was “most heavily-weighted;” or, as he was oftener accustomed to put it, which of the two old daddies would cut up fattest. The young Williamses outnumbered the juvenile Hitchcocks; but the Deacon's Gonecusset shares trebled those of the Esquire, and he had plenty of means beside; therefore he went over, that same evening and invited Mary Ann Williams to drive with him; and her mother being present, she had no choice but to accept, and now the poor girl was going to be married to him. The wedding-dresses were made, and the cards out; they were as big as a pocket dictionary. Six of them, — the “at church,” the “at home,” the Deacon and the Deaconess's names conjointly, the bridegroom and the bride's separately, and the monthly reception day. And in the corner of the “at home,” were the letters R. S. V. P. in gilt and azure. Old Miss Pettingill asked Jan Vedder what that meant, and he explained that it stood for “respectable society, victuals provided,” and appealed soberly to Mrs. Williams to confirm his statement, and she said with real gravity, equalling his assumed seriousness, —

“Oh, no, indeed, I guess not; I asked the clerk, and he told me how 'twas, ‘Rings, silver vases, pianers, to be give to the bride;’ but folks don't need to confine themselves to them things, if they don't want to, you know; they can pay their money and take their choice, of course.”

The Deacon's fears for his child's happiness, based on his

study of her face and conduct, were laughed at by the mother, who naturally had her daughter's interest at heart ; and Mary Ann's faint struggles were ignored and frowned down as ridiculous. Mrs. Williams carried matters with a high hand, and the weazened little papa comforted himself, that his would-be son-in law was a very active man in the church, and well-to-do in the world ; and the daughter offered many fervent prayers, and trembled in secret ; and was passive and inoffensive in public ; and waited for the coming of her unwelcome bridal " as sad as a bride's wedding," at heart. She watched Mr. Nickson's face, as dumb animals watch a fierce master's ; sometimes with too obvious shrinking, almost despair. The two weak ones were too feeble " to cope with so formidable an adversary," whom her recent beravement had not in the least softened. Baxter, her eldest son, was dead and turned to dust ; she had done her duty faithfully by him, and given him an expensive funeral. Old Miss Pettingill said " it was such a beautiful burrying that it was a real pleasure to contemplate upon it, and it seemed a'most a pity he couldn't a been there himself to see how nice every thing went off." Now Mary Ann her eldest daughter was going to be married and she rose equal to the occasion. It was her first wedding, and she determined to have it gorgeous and complete.

The bridegroom-elect also held opinions upon the proper style of his nuptials. He purchased a showy mansion, a little way up Goneset Street, upon which he put so many kinds of ornamentation, that the architecture became truly " composite," and outshone the " two steeples and a doom," which Captain Slocum said he'd got upon his house. One corner was a Chinese pagoda ; one, a Gothic chapel ; a third, a tower with a roof so high and steep, that Captain Slocum asked the banker if he " owned all the way up ;" and in the centre, an Italian

villa. And over the great gate to his sumptuous barn (which edifice a couple of Druse missionaries, home, begging for money to build a chapel on Mount Lebanon, mistook for a church, it was so imposing and solid), he caused to be erected wooden figures of a fox and a pig. Miss Pettingill remarked of them, —

“Law, sakes! what drefful peculiar creatures to stick up onto that Nickson’s fence! Massey me! how folks can. But I suppose, mebby they’re family statutes.”

The banker furnished his house superbly; sending to Toptown for upholsterers, and other cunning artificers, and superintending the whole in detail.

Adeliza Euphemia went over it the day before the wedding, and said “the pictures wasn’t much,” and the carpets “would sweep off;” and spoke against the bedsteads, groundlessly, for every thing was elaborately elegant. You might almost have taken the Deaconess and the banker for the lovers, they were so chatty and familiar together. Poor Mary Ann was consulted upon nothing. She was not even permitted to have her dear pastor and friend, Mr. Growing, to perform the ceremony, the Rev. Dr. Perfect, being fetched from Nansook Junction again, to officiate. Indeed the Growings were not invited to the “at home;” a slight, it was intended, they should deeply feel. The girl begged with tears to be allowed to take her first communion before she became a wife; she felt as if it would comfort her, and give her strength for her future. But she was positively refused by her mother, who had a private plan, about that, she was waiting an opportunity to carry out. There was a paper in circulation, asking Mr. Growing to resign; and as in Congregational churches the sister’s vote, she and Mrs. Hitchcock had been very busy, and she looked to have Mary Ann come out under the management of the Rev. Dr., who was known to lead off such ceremonies in dramatic style. And

so poor Mary Ann, who never had her say nor her way in *her* life, was going to be married by a stranger whom she disliked, to a husband she was afraid of. Married, with ostentatious display, while her heart was still sore with her brother's recent horrible death. Her mourning was to be put aside, and she decked out in bridal finery, and to take her place by side of the banker, a centre figure in the costly show.

CHAPTER XIV.

JOHN NICKSON EMBRACES THE DEACON.

DAY hath put on his jacket, and around his burning bosom buttoned it with stars; and John Nickson is putting on a new suit of black, of the most stylish cut, and *such* a white satin vest and necktie! His friend Knox threatened to be present at the ceremony; and was only kept off by a bonus. Like the organ-grinder, who knew "the vally of peace and quietness, and never moved on under a quarter," Knox stuck to his pious friend and bled him deeply sometimes.

The long parlor, at 32 Gonesusset Street, was gorgeous with flowers, and one corner was arched off into a nuptial bower, by a cunning wreathing of ground pine, and a little portable altar erected therein. Cymbalinus Adolphus had designed and superintended its completion with vast enjoyment, and had originated no less than fifty "widdles" while the men were busy upon it; and poor Mary Ann, who could not help showing her pleasure in his neighborhood any more than a sunflower can help turning toward the sun, was forced to stand there, with her hand in his, to get the effect; and went drooping away to her

room afterwards, full of shame and sorrow. Mrs. Williams had wished a hundred times, during her preparations, that she had Belle Brandon to help her.

"She is drefful tasteey," she said, "and such a team to work when she's a mind to put in!" and Mary Ann trembled lest that beautiful blonde should be invited to assist at her wedding.

The black cake was baked and frosted; and the bride's loaf, which was ordered from Toptown, had arrived. The bride, dressed in her costly satin, loaded with orange-flowers, was waiting in her chamber with Sonsie for her only companion. Her face was chalky white, and her eyes hopeless. The "good stun walk" was covered with Brussels carpet; and there were two bands in attendance, one outside to discourse music to the passers by,—as the fellows in gilt-lace sit before a circus tent,—and the other, up stairs in the hall, between the two "nic for stat," which Mrs. Williams found in the architect's plan of their residence; and mentioned to her friends with pompous accent. The "stat" were a minus quantity, and the "nic" were filled with a couple of "Praying Sammys" backed by peacock's feathers.

The gay bridegroom came dashing up to the door in his new carriage, —

"Like a railroad train, with a queen inside,
With directors to poke, and directors to guide."

Sonsie, who was talking against time to make Mary Ann smile, announced the fact characteristically; and when he put his head into the door, shortly after, there came also a strong odor of spirituous liquors; and his eyes were a trifle watery as well as blood-shot, and the likeness to an old baked apple stronger than ever about his heavy jaws. But his dress was perfection, and his manner—well, the less said of that the better. Sonsie knew very well how to take care of herself, though she could

not punish him for his bold looks ; but poor Mary Ann had to bear his close approach, without shuddering, if she could ; and his breath ! augh !

After he was gone, she put her hands on Sonsie's shoulders and gazed into her face, seeking hope, and begged with dumb lips for help ; till the good, honest girl's eyes filled with tears, and she had hard work to force the needful smile.

Dame Williams bustled in, adjusted her cap before the mirror, and dabbed her blazing face with the powder puff.

"There's one fool come," said she.

"Yes, mam, — he's just been up here," replied Sonsie.

"What do you mean ? You had strict orders not to let nobody in to see the bride and spile the effect of her *costoom-tout-onsambal-engtray* ! Mr. Brown has taken a heap of pains to get them all up scrumptious. Here, Mary Ann, I told *you* to put your diamond ring outside of your glove ! You don't take no pains to show off things. Such trouble as I and Nickson had to pick it out too ! A real solitary ! I wouldn't take it till the clerk fetched up his boss, and I made him warrant it. He got it from old Solitaire himself, so I know it's genuine."

"But, mother, I've got to pull off my glove, you know ; so that I can't possibly wear it so," answered Mary Ann, who dared not add that she hated the sight of the bauble anywhere.

"Well, well ! you needn't put the glove on, 'tinerate, after the ceremony."

The house was full of guests. Old Miss Pettingill came early, and was comfortably swaying back and forth in her rocking chair, with the regularity of the shuttle, while she wove the woof of her conversation.

"Law !" said she, "how drefful numerous that young Brown is ! introduces everybody, and dressed up to fits ; he looks as

if he was workin' for the firm of Walker & Dolittle in his store close ; don't he ?”

“My husband's nephew is a puffily fastigias young gentleman, Miss Pettingill, and comprehends the vocation of usher in its minutest particularism,” answered Dulcet, to whom the remark was addressed.

“Well, I don't know but he is all that ; but I will say he can talk more and say less than any feller of his size I ever set eyes on ; and there's Miss Williams ! massey ! what a frock, furbelows and flounces ! Peculiar ! how folks can ! they do say — folks does — that Mary Ann had a sneakin' notion arter that pismire of a chap herself, but her ma she sot her foot down on that to wonst.”

Mr. and Mrs. Nancesca Lankman, coming in at this juncture, stopped the flow of the ancient maiden's communications. Mr Lankman was sub-editor of the *Millville Universe*. He said his mother was a Pole, which seemed quite likely ; he looked like one — bean-pole ; and Mrs. Nancesca Lankman's mother might have been a roly-poly, for she was as round as a pincushion. Jan called Mr. Lankman “Breezy Nancy ;” he had a favorite critique upon any book which in the least approached to sprightliness, — “It is a breezy book ;” and he was exceedingly zealous in his watchfulness over the English language, and stigmatized as “slang” any use of the cant, queer, expressive Americanisms, which are as common among our original, quip-loving people as shin-plasters. He had a choice selection of critiques, which he kept corked for use upon new works. Sometimes he simmered them all down into one article ; but oftener he dribbled out a few. But upon whatever subject he discoursed, you could see Mr. Nancesca Lankman, as in a glass darkly.

Captain Slocum happened to stand near him, and began talk-

ing up the new church. Mr. Lankman found fault with it from steeple to foundation, and mentioned many beautiful edifices he had seen in his recent trip abroad (in fact, he was so much in the habit of enriching his talk with references to his foreign tour, that he reminded one of the minister, who, in like case, commenced his invocation, one Sunday morning, "Oh, Lord, thou knowest that when I was in Europe," and then branched off into art galleries, the coliseum, forum, St. Peter's and the Appian Way).

Captain Slocum listened, with a queer grin, and said, in the first pause, —

"Look a here, Lankman ! isn't your trumpeter dead ?"

"I do not understand the meaning of your extremely abrupt question, sir," replied the sub-editor, turning very red.

"Well, I kinder thought mebby he might be deceased, because you've got the knack of blowing up such a bully blast for yourself ; and, I say, Lankman, there's going to be a big convention out West ; all ladies invited to attend, irrespective of sex ; ought to go to that ; all the Miss Nancys 'll be there. Them's the heft of my remarks. Haw, haw !"

The company were taken up to see the presents, spread out in the best bed-room, and various were the exclamations upon their number and value. Pauline Bradshaw, who was everywhere, with Dick and Gracie in her train ; counted the soup-ladles, — *nine* of them.

"I say, Dick, isn't it a pity Mr. Nickson and Mary Ann are not Brobdignagers ! What a famous set of teaspoons these would make," said she.

The bridegroom's gift was on a salver by itself, — fifteen hundred dollars in gold. It made a rare show ; and after the ceremony, it was taken to the bank and locked up and she never saw it afterwards.

Mr. Hauxhurst, with Susie Jenkins on his arm, edged in among the procession going up to salute the bride, and laughed as he espied Mary McCross.

"Ah, Miss Mary!" said he; "'We met, 'twas in a crowd, and I thought that you would shun me.' I wonder if you have still identity enough left to be able to say, 'Who is my neighbor?'"

"I hope so, though we certainly are 'pressed to remain,' like a box of Smyrna figs."

"Yes, really," replied Cabby, who was taking up Miss McCross, "quite a crush! I feel like a slice off Mr. Jones welded onto a piece of Mr. Green. Very neat idea, that! really, — and *ma foi*, — there's Miss Adliza. She's suffering a sea change, and quite unnecessarily too, for she's always rich and rare. I call that good, now!"

"What does it mean, Mr. Brown?" inquired Mary, innocently.

"Why, don't you see she's robed in sea-green. 'Tis quite a crush, this, to be sure. I've said a number of neat things to-day, but that is the best of them all," and Cabby "laughed consumedly," and twirled his glove in high feather.

Everybody was in raptures over the bride's dress. "Sating that ud. stand alone," said old Miss Pettingill, pinching the fabric sily in her thumb and finger; and the refreshment tables were much praised, though the Deaconess told her guests, apologetically, that it was "only a cold coalition." Adeliza Euphemia had got a little speech, which she sported several times during the banquet.

"Irene! Susie! Mr. Brown! wont you take a *tambour de batong de ding dong*?" said she.

She had picked her question word by word out of her French dictionary for the occasion, and she considered it very effeo

tive; and Mr. Nickson, who spoke Canada French, poked her in the side, and said,—

“Pretty good, Miss Hitchcock! pretty good, by — ahem! wont you have a dish of coffee?” and he swallowed down the expletive he was about to top off his sentence with, in safety.

Mrs. Deacon Proddy and Mrs. McCross stood close to the table, a long time comforting the inner woman with a multiplicity of good things.

“Do take some of these trolloped oysters, Sister McCross, do.”

“Well, I don’t know as I will. I’ve rather lost my appetite lately.”

“I vum, Mirandy! I hope there wont nobody find it; it’ll ruin them if they do,” replied her husband, jocosely.

Deacon Williams followed his daughter up to her room, after the parade was over; he wiped his eyes, and sat down, and took her on his knee. He hadn’t enjoyed himself much; once or twice he had endeavored to assist in entertaining the guests, and had been snubbed and set aside by his better-half, and he looked chap-fallen and out of spirits; and when he questioned the poor bride’s face he was very near crying.

“Never mind, pa! ’tis only two doors off, you know; and you’ll come very often to see me; wont you, dear? and we’ll have over the children, too, and be as nice and chatty together as swallows.”

But even while she talked hopefully to her downcast parent, she dreaded the future of that two doors off; and a dim uncertainty floated through her mind as to how far she would be permitted to enjoy her friends’ society. But her trust in Christ comforted her, and she strengthened her resolution to do all the duties she found, and leave the event where her interests were safe; and hand in hand they descended.

The bridegroom had disappeared from the festal scene for a short space, and returned in overcoat and wraps, with redder eyes and thicker utterance. He rather stumbled, than other wise, against his new papa-in-law, and clasped him in his arms.

“‘Oh, Romeo!’” exclaimed he, in touching accents, and a something approaching an interjective hitch in his throat, — “‘Oh, Romeo! wherefore are art thou Romeo?’ I say, old Stick-in-the-mud, what do you mean by such conduct as those? Why is this thus?”

And he went on spouting bits of plays in jovial accents, and showed an inclination to elevate his voice in song, and was with difficulty detached from his embraced support; and then Mary Ann came and hung on her father’s neck and kissed him.

“Good-by, pa,” she whispered; “you’ve been proper good to me; ever so much better than I deserved. I want you to go and see Mr. Growing, and tell him we couldn’t help it, and give him our dear love; wont you, dear, good, kind pa? And take care and not get sick till I come back to you.”

And then she was shut into the carriage with her husband.

When Lord and Lady Byron were shut in, in like manner, we are informed that the noble lord announced to his bride that she had “married a wretch, — a devil.” Poor Mary Ann Nickson needed no words to tell her what she had got for a lord and master; one look into his hateful eyes, one whiff of his poisonous breath, told the story.

Mrs. Williams called the ushers together, — Jan, and Cabby, and Peter, and Hauxhurst, and thanked them in picked language, and told them she considered them “extremely officious,” and plumed herself upon her choice English.

CHAPTER XV.

SONSIE TRIES TO SAY "PRETTY."

AN VEDDER took his loving young mother into his confidence on a certain subject. She cried a little at first, and was unhappy. She was a thoroughbred lady herself, and it seemed to her simply impossible that Jan could suffer his thoughts to rest upon a servant, underbred, *common* ! — that covered the whole ground. Peter refused to eat, when perishing of hunger, lest he should take into his composition any common or unclean element. He got a good lesson on the subject, which will bear repeating, nowadays. Princely souls are not always born in the imperial purple. Founders of families spring up from the "common ;" they make gentlefolks of themselves by their strong purpose and clean living, with God to help them.

"Why, mother ! I believe, on my honor as a gentleman, that Sonsie Eagan saved me from a drunkard's grave !"

The little lady, sitting in her crimson-cushioned chair ; dressed in spotless silk with dainty finish of laces and jewels, looked up at her boy, and saw how hearty and fresh his face was, and how strong and purposeful he looked. She knew she had cried herself to sleep many nights, and lived through days of pining anxiety for the safety of this her only son,— her "precious darling !" and she rose and threw her arms around him, and wept on his neck, and bade him "God-speed" with her blessing ; and resolved to take up bravely her part, which was, to try to make the most she could out of the daughter Jan was thoroughly determined to give her.

Jan had already tried many choice arguments to induce Son-

sie to visit his mother in his company; but she firmly declined.

"There's no occasion, sir," said she. "Your mother is a lady, and I can afford her no pleasure; and I will not be intruding meself upon her."

"That is not a proper light in which to view the the subject," argued Jan. "Of course, you wouldn't take a step to please *me*; I know that very well. But there are many things about the place that would be useful to you. The great library is full of books. You might select what you like; there's a history of Ireland, in ten volumes, full of pictures, and fairy stories, and religion, and every thing."

"Couldn't ye be fetching it wid ye some of those evenings, Mr. Vedder?" asked Sonsie, laughing. "And is it good stories, all about the Kelpie Queen, and the little hill folk, and the cauricawn, and the elves'-gloves, and Puck the Brownie? You had a right to bring it over, Mr. Vedder, or else keep silence about it."

"No, Sonsie, I'll not bring it you! If you will come in my company and pay my mother a visit, and see my home, and all the beautiful things I have to show you; I shall think you are a good, sweet, kind girl; and we'll have a pleasant walk together, and fetch back the book to the Horseshoe, but not else."

"Well, then, Mr. Vedder, they must even bide where they be; for I'll not go!"

Mrs. Vedder had never visited Ruth Blair before her sorrow, and she could not force herself upon her seclusion now, when even old friends were rarely admitted; and it didn't quite suit her ideas of her own dignity to run after the little Irish girl either; *she* was the one to pay the visit, and she must be made to do it; and she thought over many plans to accomplish it

naturally, and also many plans for her son's good ; and loved him tenderly, and took occasion to talk often upon the subject which lay dearest above his heart.

"You need not fear her thrusting herself upon you for a daughter ! I doubt if I can ever win her ; she does not love me ; nor does she dream that I love her. She keeps all her powers centred upon the education she is resolved to have. She talks with me, as with a gentleman who was about to ruin himself and his mother ; whom she stretched out a hand to save ; but she gives me more estimation than belongs to me there ; she does not know how much I owe to her. She credits me with strength of purpose I haven't got ; *she* is the good angel, who held me back from disgrace. It is the hope of winning *her* for my wife that keeps me now. She lets me walk with her, when she can't help it ; and she tells me plenty of plain blunt truths ; and she pumps me for the knowledge she thirsts for ; but there is always a great gulf between us. I am afraid I widened it that day on the hill, by my own folly. You see, mother, I didn't know her, and I didn't stop to think ; and in short I made a mean cowardly speech to her, and I know she can't forget it ; I've seen it in her face and manner since a thousand times. She is proud ; her pride folds her about like a mantle ; she is always the poor Irish girl ; and I am the gentleman — nothing to her in any way. She urges me to be useful, to help humanity ; and jeers, with her subtle, sharp wit, at my idle, purposeless life. But, mother, she never links her future with me, never ! *She* walked in low places unsoiled, and I, carefully kept, luxuriously attended, fell — that's the view she takes of the case. You see how slender a chance I have to ever make her love me !"

"She wishes to go to school, you say ?"

"Oh ! *she* wishes it ; but not enough to be indebted to me

for it. I urged and argued my best ; and I got plain 'no' for my answer. She'll get her education, though ; she is getting it every day. Mrs. Blair says her progress is like a miracle. Oh yes, she'll get it : and she'll work herself to death ; she'll be a broken-down, faded teacher after a while, in spite of me. And I have the money she needs, and the love she don't want ; you see, mother, *money* isn't of any value ! I believe I'll go to China or Hindostan or the South pole !"

"What plan of useful life does she propose to you, my boy ?" asked Mrs. Vedder, who could not bear the notion of Jan, leaving her and becoming a rover again.

"A mission school and chapel, just now. She works there, heart and soul, mother ; it would do you good to see how those rough boys respect and obey her. The fact is, I don't believe Sonsie Eagan will ever get married. She is so full of doing good to the many, I doubt if she will ever bring herself to love the one ; and if she does, a reformed drunkard will not be the man !"

"Don't speak in that way of yourself, Jan, my dear ; I do not like to hear you" said Mrs. Vedder, laying her hand upon her son's arm. "So this wonderful girl wishes you to build a chapel, does she ? What will it cost ?"

"Six hundred dollars or so ; I suppose, there's a lot of lumber, and odds and ends of stuff, left over from our church that I could buy cheap."

"Take a thousand, Jan, and buy a lot, and commence directly ; and I'll furnish it for you. You make me laugh at you, my darling ! *She*, not love *you* ! you forget, I think who you are. The Vedders are a good old family, and as for the Tillinghasts ! there isn't better blood in the country ! There's never been a politician, or a strong-minded woman among

them, since they first came over, — but plenty of gentlemen and ladies."

Jan took up his mother's small, jeweled hand and kissed it.

"Dear little aristocrat!" said he, "you fear that your democratic boy will bring taint to your pure blood. Ah! you don't know Sonsie Eagan! Nature made her a lady."

"Well, Jan, bring the lady to me; let me see and judge for myself. Tell her the price of the chapel is a visit to Brook-edge, and leave the rest to me."

"Why, mother! she'll never come! It will be of no use; she'll laugh at me. She's got the merriest blue eyes, mother! and the prettiest cherry mouth, and such dimples in her cheeks! you never saw the like! She'll tell me to go and do my duty like a man; and leave her time to do hers. She always sets her hands on her hips, and looks at me over her shoulder when she is suspicious or excited."

"True Irish fashion," thought the mother; but she said, "She will come, Jan, if she is the good, earnest girl, you think her."

"Well, mother, I'll try once more, —" Jan shook his head, — "but I'm afraid 'tis useless."

That very afternoon, Jan called at the Horseshoe, where he always had the *entrée*, and found Sonsie just at the tail-end of the week's ironing (she would do all the work of the house. Ruth was not permitted to wet her fingers; teaching, being in Sonsie's opinion, sufficiently exhausting, with the care of Pigeon and the sewing), and her hands were always busy, her head clear and cool, and her lessons never-failing. She often got help from Jan; when Ruth was shut into her room, or out for the daily walk, she compelled herself to take, with her boy for companion. Her boy! who was daily growing more like his father, and who was so rosy and healthy and happy, full of tricks and pranks and sportive mischief.

"But 'mid a' his daffin', sic kindness he shows,
He's as dear to her heart as the dew on the rose."

In truth, Ruth scarcely knew how much Pigeon helped to keep her heart alive, and her courage up. "I have him to love me, whatever comes," she said sometimes; "and he'll be a good true man after a while. I must take such care of myself that he will he feel no shame in looking at his mother. Ruth was a darling bud of a woman, when she thus glanced "adown the vale of time" to Pigeon's manhood; and so good and judicious a mother as deserved every thing from the child to the man.

She gave him his father's name, but not at the baptismal font. On that fateful day when she questioned her soul in the sudden stillness of her new loss, and learned that she was alone, she perceived that her child's face was wet with tears, which had dropped from her own eyes; and she signed the cross upon its forehead, and in those holy drops which welled up from her breaking heart, she christened him George, "in name of the undivided trinity."* She was a good Protestant, but in her weary trouble Christ was her nearest friend, her best helper; and she thought it no sin to consecrate her darling by the sign of his Holy suffering.

Ruth liked Jan, and believed in him sincerely; her own griefs had not closed her heart to outside good; and she took the liveliest interest in Sonsie and the greatest care of her; planning for her, teaching and helping her, so that every day was a step up the ladder; and we know how ardently the young Irish lassie enacted the part of the little mouse to her dear friend and mistress, as she would call her.

"Can you walk with me this afternoon, Sonsie?" asked Jan. "I want your advice. I have nearly made up my mind to set our chapel in operation, and you must help me select the site."

* This beautiful idea is borrowed from that rare writer, F. W. Shelton.

Sonsie looked into her basket. "A walk, sir! I don't know about that. I've a deal to finish yet, but I'll work me best. Why, Mr. Vedder, sir, what ails your cheek?"

Sonsie pointed her finger at a purple promontory on the young man's face, angry and swollen, — one of those beauties which gave such zest and variety to the experience of good old Job.

"I'm trying to cut a swell," he replied, passing his hand gingerly across the spot,

"To cut a swell, is it, sir! then why don't ye send for Dr Jenkins sure, he'll cut it for yer, as neat as a cat licks her ear."

"Never mind your jokes, Sonsie. I was not in safety, neither had I rest, neither was I quiet; yet trouble came. Tell me you'll come out with me. My mother enters warmly into our chapel plan, and promises to furnish it for us."

"Now I call that nice of yer mother! and you are really going to do a good thing at last. I'm more gladder then I can tell you!"

"Say 'gladder,' or 'more glad,' Sonsie, if you please; 'more gladder' is bad English."

"It is good Irish, then, sir; but I thank you for taking the trouble to improve me language, and I'll try hard to remember. I'll go out with you. I said 'with,' sir. She smiled archly. "Did ye mind that, now!"

"Yes, Sonsie, I see you are Irish clear through."

"Yes, troth and I am; descended from Milesius and Japhet, shall I tell you the rest of it while I am smoothing the linen, or will you help me with me English history?"

Jan took up the book and read aloud the lesson, and explained and enlarged it with knowledge of his own, and descriptions of the scenery he had travelled over (much of it on foot in the most Bohemian fashion, — knapsack on his back and oak

stick in hand); and by the time the clothes were all on the horse, the lesson was finished, and Sonsie thanked him warmly.

"I'll just run and freshen up myself a bit," said she, "and be ready."

Jan looked at her and thought she was as fresh as a rose already, and sat still thinking over her piquant utterances, and sharp crisp ways, till she came down hooded in green, and well wrapped in peach-meat. Jan would have given her no end of dresses if he had dared, but her sturdy independence, was always in his way, and he never ventured to offer her so much as a pair of gloves. She was tidy and presentable always, and not wanting either in little finishing articles, — collars, cuffs, and ribbons; and as for shoes! no princess ever went in trimmer guise. I'm afraid Sonsie was a little proud of her foot; at any rate, she always trod with a light step, and airy. And she could keep a brisk pace for miles, without showing fatigue; her cheeks would flush crimson, and her eyes laugh in merry light, while she tossed off her oddities, answering the teasing, Jan loved to engage her in. And her breath came evenly from her expanded chest, and her good lungs felt no uneasiness. She never told how she furnished herself with what she needed, — clear-starching, fluting and knitting, — nor how she sewed odd times; all that she considered her own affair. She would accept nothing from Ruth, except board and education; and those she meant honestly to earn. Mary Ann Williams, Mrs. Nickson now, was permitted to contribute a little sometimes; but she had been useful to Mary Ann, and the poor timid woman leaned on the strong girl's strength.

They walked steadily and enjoyingly on through the glen, and over Hogsback, and came down around the pinnacle, and by common impulse they paused before an enclosure, — a pasture lot of four or five acres, bordered on one side by Roaring

River, overlooked by the pinnacle, and backed by gentle hills, among whose pretty dells and wooded shelters lay the village dead. Two or three sheep, some half grown calves, and the cow ponies, were feeding there, nibbling the hay, rubbing about the stack and sunning themselves by its side.

"Captain Slocum's meadows," said Jan.

"A sweet, purty, quiet place, Mr. Vedder," replied Sonsie, richly rolling her "r's"

"'Pretty,' Sonsie; do try to say 'pretty.' I wish you could remember."

Sonsie, nothing discomposed, pronounced the word again and again, but it would twirl in her utterance in spite of all her care as it always did when she was pleased or excited.

"Indade. Mr. Vedder, ye never spake a truer word than that just now. I'm Irish clane through."

"I daresay Captain Slocum would sell this piece," said Jan, after looking at her a moment. How would you like it for our mission?"

"I think it will be just splendid, sir."

"Very well, Sonsie; before I move an inch in it, I'll make a bargain with you."

"A bargain, sir!" Sonsie's head was up, and her suspicions alert directly.

"Yes, Sonsie, a compact; so much for so much; a promise to pay for value received: you must consent to go and make my mother a visit."

"That's very quare of you, sir! Mayhap you've forgotten our interestin' conversation on that same subject. I don't at all see the connection; I think I gave you your answer that time."

"Answer is the Latin for goose, and you're one," said Jan, pettishly. "If I tried to remember all the silly things you say, I should have my head so full of nonsense, that it would quite

drive out my education ; and where would your Irish history be then? By the way, I was looking into that large one in the library this morning ; it's from the time of Japhet till now, and full of pictures, and the whole life of St. Patrick, and a full length engraving of him, with his foot on a snake, and the martyrdom of St. Eliph, son of the king, who gave up vast possessions, being persuaded that it was delightful to serve God in poverty. That would just suit you, Sonsie."

"Mr. Vedder, what is the Latin for 'tease'?" asked Sonsie, with a laugh in her eyes.

"Well, Ollan Folda the stubborn, the whole thing lies packed in a nut-shell, — no visit, no chapel. I have as good a right to my whims as you to yours ; and if you ask me to spend my time and money for a wish of yours, the least you can do is to comply gracefully with any little proper request I feel inclined to make ; at any rate, I wont move a finger till you gratify me in this. It will be a useful lesson to you ; teach you to respect the wishes of others, which you haven't thus far learned to do, as you ought ; and it is but a trifle after all."

"An' is it a thrifle that ye deem it, sir, for me to put meself out of me station and forget the hole of the pit from whence I was digged, and go visiting to a lady, like yer mother, and let her take notice of me poor English, and I be hurted at it? No, no ! Mr. Vedder ; wait a couple of years, till I've me 'idication."

"But my mother wishes to see you, Sonsie ; she has often heard me speak about you and she bid me ask you to come ; she was much moved by the ready presence of mind and agile action you used to save those poor little children. Rainbow took a fancy to my mother the first time he followed me home, and he lies in her cushion, nearly every day. She is not a very formidable person, Sonsie. Ollan Folda need not fear her ; she is not nearly so tall as you."

"She's comfortable lookin', sir, and nothing fearsome. I've seen her often riding her purty mare, and looking out of her carriage window, and I've stopped to look at her, too, working among her flowers ; she's fashioned from different pottery than me. I'm sorry ye make such a coil about this visit, sir ; I don't like being called Ollan Folda the stubborn, and if there's ary thing I could do for your bonnie mother I'd go to her right willingly."

"There is, Sonsie ! I'm sure there is," replied Jan, eagerly ; "she'll tell you all about it."

Sonsie fixed her eyes upon the young fellow, and read him through and through. "It's true for ye, Sonsie Eagan ; the pair of them have talked ye over. This gentleman is getting it into his head that he will like to marry wid the Ulster weaver's daughter ; and the mother will have me to coom and be looked over, to see if I'll do. She does not know Sonsie Eagan ; but if she thinks she's the girl as will help him to make a fool of himself, after stretching up her hand to pull him into his right path, she need not be a bit worried. I'll mate with a clean-skinned O'Rouke, plase God. It would kill me entirely to be looked down upon. I'll never be helping meself to such a lot. No, no ! Mr. Vedder, sir ; yer very kind I'm sure, and I hope yer quite reformed ; indeed I truly believe ye are ; but I've no call to be loving any one just now, and I think a handsome young Irish lad with a wise head on his shoulders, stuffed full of idication ; and his blue eyes, merry wid divilment, would just please me better nor any Dutch Yankee at all, when I make up me mind to double meself. I'll go and see the lady in course, sir. She makes this coil about it, and she'll aisy see there's nothing the least to fear."

So Jan's surprise, she said, with her eyes full of fun, and one

of the bright, wide-awake looks into his face, both fearless and modest, which he liked so much, —

"I'll go right away with you, Mr. Vedder, since you and your mother are so kind as to step down and invite me up. Indade if that is the hinge, I'll be turning on it directly, and the poor boys shall not be kept out of their fine chapel by me. Right glad will Dennie be, sir; he's boot-black at the Millville House; my biggest brother, and a brave lad he is; we've the rest of the children to home along of the babby. There's a deal of Eagans, sir, and as poor as poor can be. I'm not able to speak much about them in the old country, but all of us here, is hewers of wood and drawers of water. Dennie and me, we used to sweep the crossings; and you couldn't believe how hungry we used to get those times."

She watched him curiously as she talked; he did not wince at her plain statements, but said regretfully, —

"Don't tell me so, poor child! I cannot bear to hear it. I was throwing away money by handfuls, and trying to get rid of myself as well; you did not catch me up one minute too soon."

Sonsie flushed all over, and tears sprang to her eyes. "Oh sir, what a good noble life you are able to lead with your money and your manhood!"

Jan glanced quickly at her: he was always hoping for something when she spoke like that; and was always getting disappointed. She was not looking at him, but her swimming eyes were fixed upon the gray sky beyond, and her bosom swelled with the thoughts she had no words for. He sighed and forced down the utterance which trembled on his lips. "You come and help me, Sonsie; be my guide as you are my saviour." She was so self-reliant, so independent, and put herself so far away from him in every thought; she showed so unconsciously, out so plainly, that she was engrossed with working out her plans

In her own way, as fixed and constant of purpose, as she was strong, straightforward, and honest ; and her way lay so remote from his. Poor Jan ! he was quite disheartened, and her acceding to his request, gave him, after all the trouble he had taken, but little pleasure.

CHAPTER XVI.

ZOE WALSINGHAM ENGAGES A "MAID."

THE old Vedder estate down on the flats, and on both sides of Roaring River, comprised hundreds and hundreds of acres, and was farmed by many tenants. Vast orchards piled up their fruit ; cranberry marshes, which were a fortune in themselves. The wood-lots, which were forests of giant trees ; the hop-yards and tobacco fields ; and young Jan, who loved Sonsie Eagan, and was the only son of his mother, was heir to them all. The estate had been under the care of Cousin Vedder, as he was called, who superintended the whole, and invested the proceeds. Jan's wants were always munificently supplied, and every thing looked prosperous and correct. Of late the young man had been thoughtfully watching Peter Bradshaw and turning over matters in his mind ; and now that his twenty-first birthday had passed, he fully determined to try his hand at managing his own affairs. He spoke about it to his mother, who expressed the fullest faith in his capacity, and rejoiced in the hope of keeping him near her. He also talked it over with Peter, who was enthusiastic in support of his resolution ; and the two carried the plan to Peter *père*, who likewise approved, but very carefully ; then Jan

owned that a look into the books and accounts had made him uneasy and suspicious. There were certain discrepancies he could not harmonize. Much timber had disappeared, and a good deal of stock sold, which had not brought the profit to the estate, which might have been looked for; and after a strict investigation, in which Jan begged the Bradshaws to assist him, Peter *père* advised him to send Cousin Vedder about his business with that wicked flea in his ear whom no man pursueth, and promised advice and assistance; and Peter the younger was fierce to help him get horse-rakes, and horse-rollers, and threshing-machines, and root out all the tenants, and farm his own lands, and half envied him the scale upon which he could do it. And so, to Cousin Vedder's infinite astonishment, who had no idea of the mine about to be sprung upon him, the young heir requested him to feather his nest elsewhere, and locked up the safe and put the key in his pocket.

Peter found Jan an apt scholar; and the strong, good young fellows enjoyed their farming hugely. Jan held opinions of his own, too, upon some subjects, and knew fully as much as Peter, and their arguments upon the mooted points were endless. Jan held to Houdans, and Peter swore by Dorkings. Jan said Peter shut up his horses too much.

"If you want to make a large horse, just lock him up in the stable and stuff him full of food; but if you desire a good serviceable roadster, let him have the run of the yard, and give him coarse grain along with his mash."

Jan had imported, for his mother, some splendid "Calcutta swan fans," with twenty-six feathers in their tails. Peter wanted a pair for Zoe; but as Jan had a use for the first couple, he had to tell his friend the why of it. At which Peter looked very grave, and took time to think before giving his opinion.

He had often seen Jan walking with the Ulster maiden, and thought his own thoughts on the subject ; but would not speak them unless it was necessary, and very glad was he to find him true and manly beyond his suspicions. But such a marriage ! he shook his head, and made up his mind to confide in Zoe ; fully expecting she would turn up her nose in scorn, and despise Jan for low-mindedness. There's no telling what a woman will do in such cases, and Peter opened his eyes wide in astonishment.

"What ! send her to school and marry her afterwards ! Oh, Peter, how nice and romantic ! and so noble of Jan ! So few men can see virtues under poverty. I declare I must shake hands with him, and thank him in the name of the sex ; and I should like to help him. She's good and pretty, too. I was looking at her, last Sunday, in Mission School. She talked earnestly ; and her cheeks were like roses ; and really, Peter, she has a lady's hand and foot (Zoe glanced at her own little slipper). You may tell Jan from me that I highly approve his plan."

"You haven't forgotten that she is a servant, Zoe ; like Bridget, your housemaid ?"

"She's quite different, silly Peter ! Bridget is not in the least pretty. You're a nice Democrat, aren't you ? Didn't we have a President who was a tailor, and who couldn't read till his wife taught him ? Let everybody find their level, I say. I mean to go right away and see Sonsie, and encourage her."

"Well, Zoe, you are a trump ! I am rather glad, though, that you are a born lady ; I have no fancy for 'moulding a wife ;' but I like Jan, and I hope he hasn't made a mistake. He is a thoroughly whole-hearted fellow, and has got a will, too. He persists in sticking up for Kerry cows ; because they're Irish, perhaps. You know, Beecher says, 'dirt is so good for people

that God rolls them in it every third or fourth generation ;' and we can't any of us go back too far and not stumble upon something queer. I know there was a Bradshaw hung in Boston in colonial times, for stealing a sheep."

"That's nothing remarkable. Those old Puritans rather liked hanging people as a pastime ; it agreed with their constitutions."

"But the best of this affair is, Zoe, that Jan is afraid Sonsie Eagan wont have him. He has made no progress at all thus far."

"That's because she's proud, Peter ; afraid of being looked down upon ; as she gets on, and grows sure of herself, she'll feel different. But, Peter, I as good as knew all this before ; I've been observing Sonsie a good while. You know, we found her long ago, down to the old school-house ; and Chris and we gave her her first start. I'll take hold in right earnest now ; I'll go this evening, and I'll let her understand that *I'm* her friend."

Sturdy Peter pondered this answer some time, and renewed his conviction that whatever Sonsie Eagan might be, Zoe Walsingham was certainly the most wonderful girl in the world.

Fired with ardor, Zoe dressed, in her complete, delicately elegant fashion, and presented herself at the Horseshoe. The door was opened by Sonsie, who had on a clean checked apron, and held a knife, and a half-pared apple in her hand ; and though she paused in her merry lilt, the mirth of it still danced in her eyes.

"How do you do, Sonsie ?" said Zoe, offering her gloved fingers. "I'm glad to find you at home."

"Thanks, Miss Walsingham ; but Mrs. Blair is out for her walk ; she'll be sorry indeed to miss you."

"But I came to see *you*, Sonsie ; I'm coming in for a chat,"

replied Zoe, rather cooled by Sonsie's quiet behavior ; but trying to feel at ease, and look gay and sociable.

Sonsie sat down on a distant chair, after her visitor had placed herself to her liking ; and waited for her to open her budget ; and she glanced up at the clock in the corner. She had a certain amount of business to accomplish before bedtime, and not too many minutes to finish it in.

"I want you to tell me how you are getting on, Sonsie. You study in Ruth's school, do you not?"

"Not in school just, Miss Zoe ; I put such time as I can get from me housework into me lessons."

"Do you find—ahem !—have you any troubles in your path, Sonsie?"

"None but I am mistress of, thank you !" replied Sonsie, clear-eyed and attentive.

"There goes Jan Vedder !" exclaimed Zoe, looking down the street (she shifted her ground a little, and took up the familiar style). "How his hair curls ! I wonder if it takes root at both ends !"

"I should think it might, ma'am," replied Sonsie, as if the topics were quite outside her range of subjects.

Zoe found it impossible to go on. She couldn't offer service to a person who did not need it, nor help to such a self-contained creature as this, and as for friendship !—the young Irish girl's face and manner rendered all mention of it infeasible. The more Zoe looked at her, the more she admired her. There could be no two opinions as to her beauty,—real Irish beauty though ; and while she was thinking how she could begin afresh, so as to get closer to the proud maiden she wished to benefit, and also to inspire her with confidence and friendship for herself, Mary Ann Nickson opened the door, and walked familiarly in. Sonsie rose and put out her two

arms, and when her visitor threw herself into them, she kissed her over and over.

"You look tired, mavourneen!" said she, in a cheery, caressing voice. "Come, leave off your cloak, and rest a bit."

"No, Sonsie, I cannot; I came for you to drive with me, the carriage is at the door, and the horses are troublesome about standing. I want a real nice old-time talk. How proper good it is to see you! Sometimes I wish I could get sick again, so's you'd have to come and nurse me. Your cheeks are as rosy as ever, and your friendly eyes! *You* love me, don't you?

"In course I do, dear; I couldn't choose but love my pet; but I can't get out this night. I'm sorry, since you want me; but I'm making pies, and my Spanish bun is as light as feathers. I mustn't leave me work, you know. How handsome your carriage is, dear."

"Yes, very handsome," answered Mrs. Nickson, with a disappointed sigh.

Zoe rose.

"I hope you will come and see me, Sonsie. You are not always baking buns, I suppose," said she, offering her hand.

Sonsie stepped back, and smiled.

"When I'm not baking, I'm washing, or ironing, or cooking, Miss Zoe. I haven't many spare moments, like you young ladies, you know, that have naught to do but seek your pleasure."

"Don't reproach me with my idleness. I'll come and get lessons from you, how to use my minutes; may I, Sonsie?"

"Sure it is laughing that you are, Miss Walsingham; but I'd be glad to serve you any way I could; you were very kind those times; I haven't forgotten."

"Never mind all that now, Sonsie; that was ever so long

ago ; but you must come and see me. I insist, I want to introduce you to my mother."

Sonsie laughed as she shut the door upon her visitor. "The dickens is in all these gentlefolks, I think," said she ; "they're determined I shall know their mothers."

Zoe went home mortified and discouraged, and wondering at her ill success. She had seen Sonsie frolic with Pauline and Gracie, and had heard her talk with Mary McCross, on mission-subjects, as one friend talks with another, and give opinions, and suggest plans, which were solid and valuable. But, though discouraged, she had no idea of giving up ; and after an evening with Peter, she went again to the Horseshoe, and made the Ulster maiden an offer.

"We are going in a party to New York, Sonsie, to purchase the wedding things, and I want you with us to help. I shall be so busy and full of shopping ; and there are heaps of affairs which require attention ; and if you'll say 'yes,' I shall take it as a real favor. In fact, I *must* have you ! I can't be married satisfactorily to myself unless you will."

"And is it to be yer maid, Miss Zoe ?" asked Sopsie, with her head up. "Ye'd be a gay little mistress, anyhow."

"You can put it that way, of course, if you like, Sonsie : I should rather you would say 'companion,' and should like you to say 'friend,' if such a strong, useful person as you could feel friendship for a May-fly, like me. But I'm going to be good now ; I must have you by some title, and I'll pay you any thing you please, for your trouble and loss of time. *Your* minutes are so precious, *you* make them tell ; and indeed it shall ro. be my fault if you don't enjoy the trip. We'll see all the places of interest ; all the picture galleries, and those, and *I think* the days so spent would be quite as educating as any you could get

in Roaring River; and, Sonsie, you shall go shopping, and help me buy my dresses and shawls and every thing!"

"And the changeable suits of apparel, and the mantles, and the bonnets, and the ornaments for the legs, and the head bands," said Sonsie laughing. "Oh yes, Miss Zoe, it would be rare indeed; and will Miss Chris be of your party? You said 'we,' I think."

"No, Sonsie, not that I know of; but Sabrina and her mother are going, and Peter, has asked — Mrs. Vedder — a-n-d perhaps Jan also."

"Oh!" replied Sonsie. Then after a moment she answered, "I'll go, Miss Zoe, if me mistress gives me leave; and I'll serve you faithfully."

Sonsie's feelings were curiously mingled, as she questioned with herself after Zoe departed. "And is it a step upward that yer takin', Sonsie, me lass, from Miss Ruthie's kitchen, into Zoe Walsingham's service? but I'll go anyhow, I think; and I'll buy that dun cow for my mother; she's just fretting for to have the wee creature; and I'll get the shirts for Dennie; and there's that mite of a Christie Malone, — he shall have a stout coat that'll fit him, and that'll be a white day for the dirty vagabond; and I'll make Mystie come and stop in my place till I get back; and I'll see a bit of the world, with me two good eyes; and I'll go over the old street, where Dennie and me starved, wid the cold and hunger those nights; and I'll show Miss Zoe and the rest, that I know who I am entirelyv."

Ruth warmly approved; and though nothing had been said o her about the school scheme, she thought her own thoughts, s to Jan's fondness for her young friend's society; and while she carefully observed, she felt no call to interfere. Sonsie was so proud and right-minded, and Jan so out-spoken and straightforward. For some unexplained reason, the Celtic lassie failed

to mention the projected service, and its consequent trip, to Jan ; and he said nothing on the subject, lest she should fly off, and disappoint him of his expected pleasure ; and the long step he hoped to make. It would seem that, what with church building, and the care of his estate, Jan had almost enough to do ; and Sonsie's jeers at his purposeless idleness, were something ill-timed and malapropos ; but he had not confided to her his plans. He loved better to draw her out, and excite the mirthful flow of her mother-wit, which gave back such sharp retorts to his teasing ; and dole out to her such scraps of knowledge as she eagerly sought for. In fact, Jan Vedder had little *ego*-ism in his composition : he did not think too highly of himself — and was more likely to do a great deal without speaking of it, than speak a great deal without doing any thing — as the manner of some is. He was tolerably well read, and had seen *very* much of the world, its highways and byways. For six or seven years he had been travelling hither and thither more than two thirds of his time, but so little show did he make of his acquirements, that his acquaintances were in the habit of considering him a "goodish sort of fellow," with social qualities, and the girls were not afraid to confide in him, and ask his advice, upon all sorts of queer subjects, and his assistance, which they were sure of, whenever needed. Captain Slocum thought the world of him ; and as for Miss Dulcet, she said, "If I knew intimately a youthful femme-sole who was desirous of undertaking the solidarity of the connubial relation, I could cheerfully mention and recommend to such femme-sole's particular notice and consideration, my young friend, Mr. Jan Vedder. He is untumultuous, but not unappreciative ; a most affluent and agreeable conversationist, and a guest to be desired by any housewife who prides herself upon the perfection of her comestibles."

Jan showed a capacious grasp of business, and a zealous aptitude for dispatch of the same, which delighted the two model farmers who had him in training.

"He's his father's son for digging," said Mr. Bradshaw. "I think he'll make a man."

"I think so too, father," replied Peter. "Indeed, I'm sure of it ; because he is a long way on that road already, you know."

"And we'll stand by him, Peter, my boy: he must not be permitted to buy his business experience too dearly."

"So we will, father ; and help him whenever we see that he is not up to helping himself. I wish you would give him your opinion of those Kerry cows ; tell him they aren't worth a rush, and talk up Ayreshires. And then about washing sweated horses : he's got it in his head to build a regular bath-house, such as he saw at Buckingham Palace (in miniature of course) ; and talks about keeping men on purpose to wash and scrub and scrape his blood horses, summer and winter, father, in cold water ! He sticks up that it will suit them as well as it does him ; and he's a regular old duck for cold water."

"He does? — the young rascal ! Well, well, I'll have a talk with him right away ; and if I can see it, why we'll have a bath-house too, Peter, my boy. There's Silver Spring running right past our stable, you know. Cold water, hey !"

CHAPTER XVII.

SONSIE NAMES THE COLT "OLLAM FOLDA."

AND now the Irish lassie had promised to pay a visit to Jan's mother. The mansion was steep-roofed, many chimneyed, ample and commodious. It was set down in the middle of a garden, full of old-fashioned flowers. The great-grandfather Jan, had been a zealous tulip-fancier; and he went back to Holland on purpose to fetch away choice bulbs, and at one time he thought himself very near to producing the much coveted black specimen, which should be priceless, and make his name famous. Jan, the grandfather, had thought less of tulips, and more of prosperity, and money-bags, and papa Jan had followed in his footsteps; so that the number of bulbs which had come down to our Jan, was comparatively small, but enough still remained to afford his pretty youthful little mother occupation and delight; with her Alderneys and colts, and black pigs (who were descended in a right line from the fierce wild boars, which used to furnish such rare sport to the old hunting barons, and were as sleek and handsome as tigers, and who lived in architectural pens, and got washed every week — the very aristocracy of pigdom), her Guinea fowls and musk ducks, white turkeys, and so on; to say nothing of song-birds and parrots. It was one of those wondrous spring times, for our climate, when March comes to us like a dream of Arcadia; instead of the sour, sloppy, biting, uncanny month we know best; when we plant peas on the first, and eat asparagus from our sun-visited beds, on the fifteenth; and crocus are all abloom beneath our windows; and grass is springing in our meadows, and the fen-cricket tunnels his hidden ways, in the

fallow pieces ; and the sheep cuddle their young lambs around the straw-ricks.

"Mighty ugly little wretches they are, too," said Sonsie, to Jan, on this very walk ; "I could niver see the potry of a long-legged rough coat like yon, who staggers about and says 'baa.' Now the illigent spry little pigeen ! he's got nimbleness, and frisk ; he's both cunning and comely."

"'Tis true, Sonsie," replied Jan ; "but the squealing pig is father to the hog, who gets clumsy and bad-smelling all too soon."

Sonsie hurried up her work, and put on her black dress, modest hat, and her new gloves ; and she stepped briskly off by the side of the heir of Brookedge, who was in high good humor, and full of teasing quips, and merry personalities.

"Are you in trim for a good walk to day, Ollam Folda ?" said he ; "you mustn't look tired when we reach home ; what little comeliness you have, it is proper to make the most of."

"Tired sir ! I niver felt the feel of it ; I could walk clear to Limerick this day, and niver get a sob of weary breath for me trouble."

"Very well ; we'll pay a visit to the up-pasture first, then I've a sick colt there. I bought him of Peter Bradshaw ; he said he was spoiled for life ; I know better ; Peter shuts up his horses too much, and feeds too high."

"Mr. Bradshaw has the name of being a famous farmer, sir. I should think he knew the best course to take with his stock."

"So do I, Sonsie. I am as wise in horseflesh, as the two Peters rolled into one ; only I'm modest."

"Oh, here's Rainbow ! Come, then, mavourneen delish ! he might tell us a deal of what he sees in this round world, Mr. Vedder, and what comments he makes upon it all ; but he's

des-creet, and kapes a still tongue ; there's many a man might learn wisdom from the silent cat."

"You mean woman, Sonsie."

Jan let down the bars, and she passed through.

"There's the colt ; see how lame he is ! he draws h's hind foot after him, and travels with his hoof up, as if the leg were too long for him."

"Yes, sir ; his knee is out of joint, I think."

"He's been shut up too much ; that's his trouble, Ollam Folda ; and his stifle slips, because his muscles relax ; but I can cure him. Don't you call him a pretty fellow ? — he is nearly pure-bred."

"Very handsome, indeed, sir, and very gentle, too, isn't he ? See ! he licks my hand !"

"I'd like you to ride that colt, Sonsie, when he gets well ; just to give him exercise, you know. I'll never let a man mount him."

"Me, sir ? Sure I niver rode a horse in my life. I'd be certain to tumble off. You bring to me mind the old saying, 'Set a beggar on horseback ;' not that I ever begged ; but folks might say it and me passin' by, and I'd be sure to think it ; only for 'beggar,' I'd put 'crossing-sweeper.'"

"How extremely unpleasant you can be, Sonsie ! But I am not going to be annoyed by your perverseness, to-day. You shall let me teach you how to ride. I've been waiting for you to come up here and name my colt, and as soon as the ceremony is completed, I am determined he shall be your property. You let Captain Slocum give you an orphan pig, and here is a sick colt to keep him company."

"It takes two to make a present, sir, — one to give, and one to take ; but I won't be unpleasant. I'll call the creature Ollam

Folda, and so get shut of the name meself: I don't like it for a Christian lassie."

"Very well, Sonsie, I will agree to hand it over to the colt, if you will promise to ride him."

"You must cure him first, sir; there's plenty of time to talk when he gets four legs to stand on."

"That's easy done, you unbeliever. I have a peck of bark, steeping in the barn now, in twelve quarts of spring water; and when that leg is washed six or eight times, and well rubbed, you'll see he'll go as free as the wind. I think you might promise now, Sonsie. There is a Spanish proverb, 'By the road of by and by, we come to the town of never.' You see the colt takes to you. Peter is kind to his animals. I must say that in his praise. They are as sweet-tempered and trusty as he is. Horses are full of love and also of revenge. They never forget an abuse, and they often revenge their injuries. Harsh language, used to a high-bred horse in his stable, will cause his pulse to rise many beats in a minute."

"Poor creatures! Mr. Vedder, and 'tis plenty of beats that some of 'em gets inside and out; and I hear the folks sayin' that Mr. Nickson's watch-eye is a great horse; he axes a big price for him. Deacon Proddy is talkin' of buyin' him for Patience."

"He can't be such a guy, Sonsie, if he is a deacon. Why, he is a long-legged, thin-chested, flat-sided, brute; what jockeys call "weedy," — no strength, no bottom; and he's got a mean, nasty trick of biting, besides; he took a piece out of his groom's shoulder, the other day."

"I've heard say, you could tell the temper of the master from his stock. Folks call donkeys stubborn brutes, but I can tell you, sir, 'tis not so; the little ones that live wid the children in the shealings to home, are as kind as cats, and they'll

sob and cry after their playfellows when they're out of sight. I'm sure yours should be gentle and generous, Mr. Vedder."

"I don't keep any donkeys, Sonsie."

"Indeed, I meant your horses and cows, and all that belongs to you."

Sonsie burst into a merry laugh, and pointed with her finger.

"The dumb animals know their friends, sir. Is not yon an odd sight, now? Rainbow has got his ride before any of us."

The deft Egyptian was perched upon the pretty colt's arching neck, and comfortably purring between his fine-pointed ears, greatly to the satisfaction, as it seemed, of both parties.

"That cat is a gay fellow. He is on friendly terms with everybody except the widow. Look, Sonsie, how do you like this place? there's about thirty acres in it. That's the house you see down yonder, with the old-fashioned porch in front, and the tall well-sweep. This is the only hill I've got on my property; and that gulley below, is where I found my handsome Mandrake, dying."

"'Twas a wicked deed, sir," replied Sonsie, growing sober on the instant, "but the poor lad was main sorry for it afterwards."

"I was not thinking of Bax, Sonsie. I bear no malice, I assure you. But let your blue eyes glance around you, and tell me what you think. I am going to send off my tenant this spring, and Peter advises me to farm the place myself. I have my own views on that score, though. Those great stacks of poles, are for the hops we raise here."

"Oh, yes, sir, I know it well. Pauline and Gracie brought me down here one time, and I dressed their hats with the purty wreaths, like to a picture I saw in a book at Miss Ruthie's; you can't tell how lovely they looked. I think 'tis a sweet purty

place, itself, sir. I should suppose the tenant would dool to leave it."

"He is not the 'noblest work of God, Sonsie, — an honest man, or I should not dismiss him."

"And what will ye do with it then, Mr. Vedder?"

"I shall make it missionary ground, Sonsie."

The Ulster maiden looked at him, and could not account for the triumph which sat on his flushed face, and they bade the colt "good-by," and walked on together. Mrs. Vedder received them in a great room, oak-pannelled, and the walls painted in landscapes of boar-hunts and African scenes, palm-trees and elephants, and whole jungles full of lions and tigers. The painter came over from Holland, on purpose to immortalize himself, on these walls, though unfortunately, his name is lost to us. The carved mantel arrived also in the ship, as well as the porcelain tiles, which were four deep around the great fireplace; also the odd jugs, and China monsters on the high shelf, almost out of reach; also the cuckoo-clock on the wall, and the oaken beaufets in the corners, heaped and piled with old painted china and solid silver.

Sonsie took in the whole in one sweeping glance, even while she was answering the kind talk of the small lady, who stood like a beneficent fairy in the centre of the room, and stretched out her jewelled hand, and gave her visitor cordial greeting. So petite was she, that she was forced to look up at the well-grown lassie; and she looked in pleased surprise. Evidently, she had not expected so much beauty. Her fancy had furnished her with a picture of a coarsish, rather red-fingered young woman, with thick waist, and heavy shoulders, who had somehow got a place in her boy's heart; and she smiled most glad approval into the well-opened, honest eyes, that met hers so frankly, and she placed her in a chair close to her own,

keeping the fine, warm, clean-feeling hand clasped in her little soft one.

"Mamma! mamma! why don't the men propose?" inquired a shrill voice behind Sonsie, which made her start. The tone of the question signified such utter disgust with the dilatoriness of the "masculine persuasion," that she could hardly help turning her head to get a view of the young woman who preferred so odd a query, and who had so evidently a cold in her nose.

"Polly, put the kettle on, and we'll all have tea," remarked the young person.

As no move was made to comply with the command, the shrill female called sharply, "Jan, Ester, Jasper, Polly Ann, Maria!" and proceeded, apropos to nothing, to relate the touching history of Jack and Gill, who went up the hill to draw a pail of water; and she went off into convulsions of heartless laughter over their unlucky tumble, mixed with such vociferous crowing, permowing, and barking, that Sonsie could not refrain from jumping up, and gazing about her in utter astonishment.

"My parrot, my dear," explained Mrs. Vedder, smiling. "Talks well, doesn't she? and she's quite a beauty. Come here, Polly."

Instantly there was a flutter of wings, and a heavy thud on to the floor of the next room, and a scarlet and green parrot came waddling up to her mistress, whose dress she climbed with beak and claws, till she reached her shoulder where she sat in state, and said, "Sing, Polly, sing!" and opened her throat, and gave out a trill and a cadenza as finished as any opera girl's, and complimented herself upon her execution, saying, blandly and confidentially, "What a darling little Polly! Oh, my, what a Polly! Good gracious, what a Polly!" Jan laughed

at Sonsie's bright-eyed astonishment, and began to whistle a polka. Polly changed her eyes into balls of coppery-orange light, and said, severely, "Cut your ears off, Jan Vedder. Good-by, sh! sh!" and spread her wings and tail, showing her beautiful scarlet back, and the lovely cobalt blue of her long pens, and weaved swiftly hither and thither, as if about to pounce upon the young gentleman directly.

"Well, indade and sure, I niver in me life seen the likes of that bird!" said Sonsie.

Jan glanced uneasily at his mother, fearful of the effect of the brogue, and Polly cut in with a remark upon the weather.

"Pretty cold, Jan! Go and take a smoke."

Jan need not have troubled himself, for his mother was more than pleased with her guest, —the free grace of her motions, the proud pose of her listening head, and her milk-white skin, unspotted by a single freckle; she saw great possibilities in her, and was fully reconciled to her as a daughter. She took her over the great house, and exhibited the curious old furniture, the family pictures; pointing out Jan's baby self, all curls and dimples, whom Sonsie was beguiled into pronouncing a "purty dear," much to the young fellow's delight, before the identity was explained, and even then she failed to discover any resemblance. She took her to the farm-yard, and showed off her pets; and to the loose box, where her colts were watching their approach with bright, intelligent eyes.

"Ah, those are the color!" exclaimed Sonsie with enthusiasm; "they're the hue of the Kerry cows' crame, the handsome darlings."

"They are beauties, Sonsie," replied Mrs. Vedder; "and of the exact shade which has always been deemed fit for the use of kings and queens."

"They be just fit for yer sweet bonnie self, I think, ma'am;

and 'tis thrue for ye, Mr. Jan, they're a deal puttier than Ollam Folda up yon," said Sonsie, laughing. The youngster explained to his mother's inquiring look, that they had come down from the up-pasture, and that the Ulster maiden had named his new colt, and promised to ride him when he was cured.

"Not precisely just, I think, Mr. Vedder," corrected she. "Mr. Jan asks me to do a many things which I can't see my way clear to, ma'am. He's a very troublesome young gentleman to a poor girl sometimes, through being over kind; but there's no harm in him."

Jan was thoroughly vexed with this careless set-down; and walked away without a word; and after they were left alone, Mrs. Vedder set herself to find out the color of Sonsie's thoughts. Woman's wit against woman's wit. The Celt with her early gotten, sharp intuition of motives and character would have been an overmatch for the little lady, if she had had any thing to conceal, or any plot to mature; but she had come on purpose to talk, and set her hostess at ease; and she spoke very freely, and very modestly, about herself, her family, and her future plans.

"I've a swate hope to go back to Ireland, and be a teacher! I seem to remember quite well the green valley and the springing corn, and the little shealing, and the poor barefoot boys to home; and I should think meself happy to carry idication on me tongue, and work in me hand, to them. I'm dreamin' about it oft and oft, and I believe I shall be let somehow to have me wish."

"Oh, you will be falling in love, and getting married before long, my child; and then where'll be all your fine schemes?"

"I don't think that likely, ma'am. What I've seen of married folks so far, don't make me crave to be it meself. I can't

say what I might do if a nice tidy young Irish boy should come along and ask me."

Jan, who could not stay long away, came back just in time for this confession of faith, and he looked so abjectly miserable, that his mother pitied him, though all such talk went for nothing in her estimation where her Jan was concerned ; and she told him to take Sonsie to the library, and show her the books. He took down the History of Ireland, in ten volumes, but all his pleasure in it was spoiled by her last speech. Sonsie readily accepted the invitation to stop to supper, and acquitted herself beautifully. She was so observing, and so quick-witted, that it was very difficult to take her at disadvantage. Though there were many pieces of old-fashioned silver on the table, of which she only guessed the use, and some odd Dutch viands, and queer cakes and pickles, she looked as much at home as though she had taken the like for dinner and supper *frequently*, and was modest and attentive, and thoroughly charmed with her fairy hostess, and readily promised to repeat her visit, leaving the precise period of time of her next coming indefinite. Mrs. Vedder ordered out her "creams," and took the young people to the Horseshoe ; and all the way back to Brookedge, after taking leave of Sonsie, she talked about her, to happy Jan, who declared that he'd certainly got the best mother that ever a boy had. She warmly approved his choice, and promised him help, and was so eager and delighted that the young fellow could not resist taking her in his arms when the carriage stopped ; and he carried her all about the rooms, before he finally deposited her on the sofa ; full of plans to get rid of the brogue, and get on the necessary polish, though. "She's a natural, graceful lady in feeling, and extremely refined also in her heart and intentions, my boy. Those can't be improved ; all we need is a wee bit of outside furbushing."

"Rosenbloom is the school for all that sort of thing, mother," said Jan, decidedly.

"Very well, Rosenbloom it shall be, then ; and she shall go well dressed and on a level footing with the other girls ; *that* shall be my care, Jan."

He was about to treat her to another trip in his arms, but she dispatched him for pencil and paper, with which to note down the needful outfit, and very merry they got among the feminine garments.

"But mother — what if, after all, she won't consent, but persists in being Ollam Folda the stubborn?" said Jan, with a very long face.

"I shall manage that, my boy. It will be a battle. I've already learned enough to be sure she will not surrender her convictions easily ; but I think I can conquer her. Oh, yes, we will have her for ours, my darling, and be ever so happy."

When Jan blew out his candle that night, and gave himself up to a last quiet think about Sonsie, her sayings and doings, he got hold of a brilliant idea, and rose very early in the morning to put it in execution. He wrote a long letter, and mailed it secretly, and waited in hot impatience for a reply.

Mrs. Vedder had a good think also ; and the result of hers was, a determination to pay a visit to the Horseshoe, and invite Sonsie to go with her and fix upon the site of the new chapel, and try to gain her confidence.

It was a strikingly clear-eyed, rosy girl who opened the door upon her arrival, fresher and prettier than ever, the lady thought. She had bound about her purple black tresses the green satin snood she loved to wear, and her trim figure was buttoned close into Baxter's plaid gingham, adorned by a white apron,

elaborate in fluting (a specialty of Sonsie's), a pair of gay slippers on her feet, embroidered with her own hands, in the shamrock and thistle, and her face all dressed in welcoming smiles ; for she had conceived a violent liking for the fairy matron, and she touched her hand and heard her voice with intense pleasure, ushered her in with pliant motions, and erect, modest-boldness, and set the great arm chair, as if it had been a throne, and waited to hear what she would say, with her face alive and her eyes so fixed upon her visitor, that the lady-kin felt intuitively the pleasure her presence was conferring.

When the excursion was proposed, Sonsie peeped out at the carriage, and the "blue-coat" on the box, and the "creams," and said merrily, setting her hands on her hips, and speaking over her shoulder, —

"And is it me, Sonsie Eagan ! that Mrs. Vedder would be after wanting to sit beside her in yon carriage for a pleasure drive, sure ?"

Mrs. Vedder recognized the attitude her son had described, and she could not help admiring the girl's cherry lips and white teeth, and her full, compact figure, even while she thought how intensely Irish she was, and she laughed enjoyingly as she replied, —

"Certainly, my dear ; and come quickly : you see my horses are impatient, and so am I. I've planned a chat, with you close by my side. Women have whims, you know, and I have a liking for you, Sonsie. It won't hurt you any, and will do you good if you are not, as my Jan says, a daughter of 'Ollam Folda the stubborn' I would not let him come, because he'd only be in the way, you know ; putting jokes into our serious conversation. It is exceedingly important that we decide immediately where we will place our chapel."

"Mrs. Vedder," said Sonsie, laughing inside, at the way she

was following the lead of the gentlefolks, and doing it with a purpose, — “Mrs. Vedder, I’ll be glad and pleased to go, if you will let me introjuice you to me mother.”

“I’ve just come from her, Sonsie,” replied the matron, easily. “I carried her a basket of primroses and iris to plant out in her patch; and a nice clump of yellow and purple crocus all abloom. My Jan took them up so deftly for me in their mould, that they won’t ever suspect that we’ve meddled with them, and you will be surprised at their beauty. Our spring is so early this year, a month ahead of last; this is only the first of March, and my bulbs are all up. I had a rare frolic with the baby called Briefne. I love babies, Sonsie; I mean to make a gay grandmother. What ever possessed you to give such a queer name to that youngling, dear?”

“It is rather queer, I suppose, to you Yankees, but not to me, who’ve been used to hear it always. It is the country of the old O’Roukes to home. Me mother was an O’Rouke, ma’am, of Ulster. We call baby ‘Brenny,’ for short; she’s a purty little bit, I think. They say she grows very like me those times. I’ll be afther sending Brenny to school one day — when I’ve earned the money.”

“Yes, yes, Sonsie, a capital plan; we’ll discuss it as we ride. You’re going to let me talk very plainly to you, I know; you like *me*, don’t you?”

“Indade, ma’am, ye may well say that wid yer pretty mouth; ye’re lovely to look at: such eyes! as blue as the flax-flower, and fine skin as white as a waxen lily, and soft hair like sunshine; you’re a winsome lady. It makes me heart dance to see you.”

“Thank you, my dear,” replied the small matron, who took very easily Sonsie’s rather particular enumeration of her charms. “I was reckoned quite a beauty when I was a girl like you. They say my Jan is his mother’s boy in face; though he

overgrew me before he was fifteen, and I have been looking up to him ever since."

"Mr. Jan 'll bear looking up to, Mrs. Vedder. Indeed I've a vast respect for him meself."

"He'll be getting a wife, I suppose, after a while, my dear." Mrs. Vedder watched the effect of her words.

"Oh, yes, in course he will. Mr. Jan'll be mating wid a fine lady; some of those days, and give ye a bonnie daughter, full of idication and goodness."

"I hope he will give me a good, loving one, Sonsie; one whom Nature has made a lady. I don't care much about grandfathers, after they're dead."

"Great Cæsar, dead and turned to clay,
Now stops some hole to keep the wind away."

A fresh, rosy, good-tempered, bright girl, who will love my Jan and me, is what I desire and expect to have."

She closed with a peculiar smile, which called up the crimson carnation into Sonsie's cheeks."

"Will you excuse me for a minute, ma'am, while I fetch me hat. I'll not be kapeing ye longer. Yer colts is prancing and skelping wid impatience."

It was one of those glad days, when all budding things are full of life and promise, and the air so rich with oxygen, or ozone, or some other life-giving principle, that, without being able to assign any reason for your conviction, you are sure and certain that the dearest aspirations of your soul are about to be realized, your fondest hopes just on the verge of certainty, and you pick up life's burdens like gay fardels, and dance in spirit to the ecstasy of your inner being. You breathe no common air laden with sighs, freighted with groans, damp with tears, but an elixir which sends the blood sparkling through your veins.

They drove to Captain Slocum's meadow, and got out of the carriage, and walked and talked all over it, and selected the most charming site for the new chapel, just where it could sit and overlook the last mad leap of Roaring River, and watch the orchards and the homes—mindful the while of the gentle slopes and wooded dells where slept the village dead; and Mrs. Vedder drew the conversation to the school plans, and set them out in choice words, and with motherly kindness and caresses, and Sonsie's heart kindled within her: she felt as if she could almost give up her life to her new friend. But the result of it all was: with hot tears raining down her cheeks, and her new friend's hand to her lips, she replied, —

"But the debt, ma'am! Sure I couldn't see my way clear at all. I'll fare on wid Miss Ruthie, till I can keep a little school; and then I'll go half the year, and pay my own way. I am young and strong; don't think me ungrateful. Don't I wish ye could see me naked heart, how it thanks you; such goodness to a slip of a wild Irish girl! but 'tis onpossible, just onpossible — 'tis indeed."

"Well, Sonsie, we'll put it differently then, and nicer. Come and be my good daughter, and let me have the right of adoption, to love and care for you. I am rich. I could enjoy your presence in my house, your fresh face at my table, your company in my drives, your daughter-love everywhere."

"And is it a sister to Mr. Jan that ye'd be makin' of me, ma'am?" asked Sonsie. Her eyes twinkled through her tears with a modest, bold look, half arch, half saucy, and wholly provoking; and Mrs. Vedder was covered with confusion by the directness of the question.

"My Jan is a fine fellow, Sonsie Eagan," said she, evasively. "You might hunt the world over, and not find a better brother."

"He's a broth of a gentleman, intirely, ma'am, indeed and, by the same token, yer the very sweetest lady-mother that I iver looked upon. If the two of us had opened our eyes in the same nest, I'd love your boy dear, and be main proud of him, but you see 'twas far otherwise. Mr. Jan was cradled on fine linen, and Sonsie Eagan crawled over the mud floor of an Irish shealing. The O'Roukes was good blood in the olden times; had lands: me papa was an Ulster weaver, and a very handsome man, I remember him too. But whisper, Mrs. Vedder: they've a little wanderer up there at Deacon Proddy's from the home for the friendless, and I hear 'em callin' her a 'gutter-snipe' — I could niver bear that indeed; there's the soil and mud of the streets on me garments yet, and I can scarce shut me eyes but I see little Sonsie Eagan, a wee bit of a dirty lassie, wid a big broom in her fist, wandering up and down; lookin' into folk's faces for a gleam of God's charity. I must get up out of that! so far up, that I can forget how it felt, and me pride won't all the while be hurtid wid every chance word. I must work me way up; tarry by meself. Nobody shall iver say that Mrs. Vedder picked up a 'gutter-snipe' out of a low place, and is trying to make a lady of her. I couldn't stand it, and me walkin' by your side, and ridin' in yer carriage, to see folks point wid the finger, nor look wid the eye. I'd know what their thoughts were, even if they ne'er gave them breath. I'll — plase God — make a true, pure woman out of the stuff he's put into me; and what respect I get from folks, I'll earn, and hold up me head. I'm coming on rarely. Miss Ruthie is kind, and me lessons is thriving; and I'll be able to teach me little school in a year's time, she says."

"But Sonsie — my dear girl —"

"Yes, ma'am, I know what ye'd be after sayin'. I'll pray on me knees for ye ivery night, and I'll niver forget yer kind words;

they'll help me more nor you can know : but you see, I was 't to blame at all : I niver asked to be born ; I just found a big broom ready to me mite of a fist, and I swept wid it !— and *I swept well* ! Mrs. Vedder. I niver did a mean thing through it al' : but *I was there* — I can't seem to forget it till I've struggled and lifted meself."

The small matron went home by the devious road which followed the course of a pretty brook, which was chatting along in tireless play, to join the great Roaring River, —

"A bracelet spun from mountain mists, a silvery sash unwound,"

and thought what she should say to her Jan, who would be eager to hear her report. She had an impression strong upon her, that this girl, in her pride, was putting herself through a purgatory, to cleanse away some fancied stains, left upon her by her street-life ; and her thoughts were all the time busy around her, in the days which followed. The girl had taken a strong hold of her sympathies, and her imagination. Dr. Jenkins said she was full of magnetism ; and she certainly aroused the liveliest interest in the mind of this little, earnest, busy lady. There was a vivid charm in her proud, self-reliant attitudes, and facile free gestures ; her clear, honest eyes were eloquent to speak her heart's bidding, and they changed in some wonderful way, from purest blue, to deepest violet, velvet-soft, and again grew tender and humid when her voice deepened, and her soul kindled with fervid feeling. Every phase she showed, was rich and full ; all signs of an affluent nature, a warm, loving, inner life, and Jan's mother was all the while thinking how happy she could be with a such daughter, and planning some new mode of attack, and she was so absorbed, that her son hugged her, and said, Ollam Folda had bewitched his little mamma ; and he talked and hoped, and

kept on making opportunities to be in the lassie's society ; and got no jot nearer to his wishes, nor saw the shadow of a change in her steadfast purpose ; and he waited impatiently for a letter from Rosenbloom.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WOMEN MAY LOVE, AND NEVER MARRY.

CHRISTABEL GOLDSMITH was sitting in the library, where she had been so happy, and so very wretched, where Otho Groenveldt had been so heavenly kind, and where he had turned his back upon her, and refused her offered hand ; where she had left the sweet promise of her life, one sad evening, when she had shrunk away from all eyes, in her unsightly robes, and taken up her lot, communing with her own heart in the stillness of her apartment. This library had been to her a penance-chamber. She had forced herself to come often and sit in the same corner, and had long ago settled with her soul in how much she had erred, and in what measure she had been sinned against ; and she never faltered in her resolution, nor wavered in her determination to uproot the one unwomanly blemish-weed in her character.

The wood fire burned brightly ; and Bertha Groenveldt knelt before her friend with her arms around her waist, and her eyes were fixed upon the brown ones which looked beyond her, into the glowing coals. Chris was talking and the other maid was listening.

“ And did they not marry ? ” asked she, when the rich voice was hushed, and the speaker sank back into absorbed silence.

“ No, Bertha, I could not find a wedding for them in all my

dreams, try I never so much. I put my will into it too, but somehow, after a certain point, the current of their lives would run strange; and so I had to be content."

"But she loved him truly, and very dearly, did she not?" altered Bertha, hiding her face. Chris paled a little, and tightened her clasp of the hand which had sought hers.

"You and I know, good sister Bertha, that women may love, and never marry."

"It is not a nice world at all, Chris. It gets drearier every day, I think."

"Not so, my sister. It is a beautiful world — full of good gifts, full of work; we can be very happy. I believe the best women live in it alone; at any rate *I* mean to have a full life; and have it to myself; a life of freedom and art and charity; as soon as I am of age, I shall go abroad; it was my papa's plan for me, and I will follow it out — as far as I am able."

"But" — persisted Bertha — half ashamed to speak her thought — "but if only it could have been different."

"There's no use in any such idle whining — it wasn't different; and now the part for us to take, is to get the most and best out of what is."

Chris pushed her friend away from her, and rose purposefully. "Come," said she, "let's to work: that is happiness enough for this evening."

"No!" answered Bertha; "I will not work any more to day. My eyes are tired, and my heart is heavy; I can't go on all the while, and never stop, as you do, — you who never want rest; I have to creep off and be quiet, and think, and then I can get stupid, and go to sleep. That is good and restful. Come, Chris, you shall sing to me."

She took up a guitar which lay on the sofa, and running her fingers over its chords, she changed her intention of giving it

to her friend, and began chanting a sort of recitative in plaintive measure.

“ ‘ I am sick, and sad, and weary,
And I long to go to sleep
Where the hectic wind-flowers blossom,
Where the trailing mosses creep.
Cross-crowned spruces in a cluster
Point to heaven beyond the sky,
But the grave is dark and lonely, —
All things lovely fade and die.

Meadow-lilies in the sunshine,
Stately stand with quiet grace ;
Iris, daily life renewing,
Shadows in the brook, her face :
But still around, from morn till even,
Mourns the same sad requiem cry,
Still the grave is dark and lonely, —
All things lovely, fade and die.’ ”

“ Nay, Bertha, do not bring out that dreary ditty of mine to confound me ; let us find something more cheersome,” said Chris, gently taking the instrument. “ I wish you would forget that foolish rhyme ; ’tis an unhealthy bit of nonsense, and I’m sorry it is so often on your lips. Come, I’ll give you a heroic ballad in merry measure.”

While she tunes the old Spanish guitar, the very same upon which Otho gave her lessons, let us look at her a little. She is dressed in soft rosy gray, of clinging stuff, and rather peculiar cut ; and at her throat and wrists, are little fluted mull ruffles ; and her hair hangs in heavy curls below her slender waist, kept in place by a narrow gray ribbon ; and a clump of snow-bells at her throat, and the like, picturesquely dropped among her tresses. Chris was not dressed without her flower, but there were no pansies now : those, for thoughts, were far too sad ; and she took such as the dear old Professor brought her daily. Sometimes they were musk roses, and sometimes Provence buds,

and again still jessamines ; or *daphne odora*, which she got but rarely, because the plant refuses to bloom a second time where a wound is made by plucking off its beauties, and the Professor only cut it for his pupil upon great occasions, when she had done marvels in painting, or mastered a whole sonata upon the violin, or charmed him with her Portuguese poetry, and she had rare pleasure in the gift thus bestowed, with many caressing words and quaint praises.

"He hath had losses." Just so. Our Chris has had losses, and she is quite a different person from the shy child who sat upon the old wall that 20th of May, and talked with Dr. Groenveldt, of the life she could enjoy. The shyness is all gone, the quiet remains ; but it is the quiet of a self-poised woman, who has suffered and conquered. She looks in perfect health, but there is an habitual droop to her lip, which something mars its beauty, and a look of suffering about her wistful eyes. Her friends are satisfied with her cheerfulness, and she has smiles for them, and ready words, and plenty of kind, helpful acts. Her strongly marked individuality is unchanged. She drops off into reveries, and has to be roused ; and says queer things, and makes odd quotations from unknown sources, but she is womanly, discreet, earnest, and loving.

Roger came in with a couple of letters, which he handed to Chris, who laid aside her guitar to read them.

"From Chandos," she exclaimed, tearing open the top one, and reading hurriedly the fun, pranks, and bits of travel with which that light hearted youngster's epistles were always crammed as a liberal housewife stuffs her pudding with plums. An enjoying laugh, and a kiss upon the "Chandy" at the bottom, ended her perusal, and she handed it over to Bertha, who had been watching her with hungry eyes, and who retired to a corner, to devour it in quiet. Chris read through the second

missive, with bent brows, and a contracted face, and rose with quick motion, and began walking up and down, holding the paper in her fingers, and with eyes dwelling on the carpet.

"Noble fellow! she said, aloud. "My dear Sonsie *shall* be reasonable! nothing shall hinder the execution of such a glorious scheme. I must write instantly."

Bertha looked up in some surprise at her excited face.

"What is it, dear, which brings so much of your soul into your eyes?" asked she.

"A letter from Jan Vedder; a noble manly letter, full of goodness. Why, when he leapt that gate up at Craigenfels, I would not have believed he could ever come out like this; and mother said he was improper too!"

Bertha gazed in a puzzle at her friend, trying to decipher the signs about her mobile lips, and to read the emotion which was evidently a powerful one of its kind; but Chris's next word chased away her thought.

"He wishes to place Sonsie Eagan, our little Irish protégé, here among us; and begs me to use my influence with her, to moderate her pride, and show her her plain duty. His epistle is full of wit and sharp points, and he states his case with concise strength."

"How very strange! does it not strike you that the child's life here would be a daily crucifixion? Poverty and pride, and her antecedents, and Irish blood! Why, Chris, they would kill her before she'd finished her first term; these school-girls are merciless."

"I do not think so, Bertha, at all. Sonsie despises and walks over all obstacles; and if she consents to come, the ridicule of foolish girls, or their neglect, will be but the small dust of the balance to her. Besides, there are enough of us to take care of her; and I can assure you she is such a scholar as Profes-

sor Noble will rejoice to get hold of; such enthusiasm, such ardor, such fire! and, to support them, such vigorous health!"

"Let us go and find Sabrina, and get her opinion."

Bertha put Chandy's letter into her pocket for a closer perusal in the privacy of her apartment.

"Nay, good sister, let Sabrina find us here. This is the fittest place for a good talk that I know of, especially just at the gloaming, when the coals get red, and the shadows flicker and dance, and our crickets are beginning their concert." She rang the bell. "Roger, please ask Miss Bradshaw to join us in the library," said she.

Pretty soon Sabrina, "the silver lake goddess," came sailing in, her purple robe trailing after her, her amber locks adorned with forget-me-nots, and diffusing about her the soft odor of the English violets she always carried. She advanced with a free step, and laid a soft touch upon her friend's arm, who, while waiting her coming, had shut herself among her thoughts.

"Ah!" Chris exclaimed, starting slightly, and smiling,—

"Sabrina—fair, devout, and pure,
Sober, steadfast, and demure,

"We want your opinion." She placed Jan's letter in her hand, and waited for comments.

"A strange scheme, truly!" was the first, as she folded the missive and returned it. "I fear it will not do; and, apropos—I have a letter from Zoe, which I have neglected in my interest in Ariosto's capers, which he planted in his garden, and watched impatiently, till they turned out to be elder-trees. One who intends to be greatly attentive to friends and lutes, must steer clear of that witching poet; but I beg Zoe's pardon, and will get through her pretty little epistle without delay."

Sabrina laughed, as she read — one of her musical songs of merry enjoyment, rippling, tuneful, sweet.

“Our friends are leagued against the poor girl,” said she, “I see no help for her. She has no choice but to surrender, and be made a scholar and a lady of; for I feel quite sure, Jan wishes to marry Sonsie.”

Sabrina was conscious of no pride of caste, but she could hardly credit the story Zoe told her under the rose — that is, secretly among the three friends. Sonsie Eagan was to her but the Irish maiden rescued from starvation, a servant born in the serving class, and nothing more; and it seemed to her unnatural that Jan should desire to lift her out of it by making her his wife. Jan! whom she had learned to consider a noble-hearted fellow, endowed with charming social qualities, and no little culture, beneath his free-and-easy exterior. She promised to help, and look after the young aspirant, in the trials they all foresaw for her at Rosénbloom; but she could find no sympathy with the consummation; and as for thinking of Sonsie Eagan as her equal! that seemed to her simply impossible.

“Our ardent little Zoe is zealous about it; full of praises of Sonsie; and the dear girl is coming out strong as a plotter too, perfectly Michievelian, in fact: only listen to her deep scheme. This Irish marvel is to accompany her as maid, companion, friend, in her New York trip, and they’ll be here next week.”

“Zoe is indeed wise!” remarked Chris, smiling. “Do you remember that saying of Krumacher’s? I offer you a golden apple in a silver rind: you receive the rind, and you find the apple? I think I’ll make one of your party, Sabrina: I’ve my prize money for expenses, and I’ll hunt a publisher for my book.”

“What if you cannot,” said Sabrina; “these publishers are

erie creatures, they say ; they frown down any poor author, who makes a humble bow with a roll of manuscript in hand."

"I shall not make a humble bow," said Chris quietly.

John Peebles, a pale, large-eyed student, came in at this juncture accompanied, by his chum Dexter, who, Chris, said always reminded her of Lamb's plea for roast pig. "Consider ! he is a weakling, a flower !" They were seeking contributors for the "Chip-Basket," and were never turned empty away by Chris, who seemed to make time for everything, and hearing of the proposed trip, he said looking at her and speaking generally, "I should like to go in your company ; and I'll shoulder my green umbrella, and pilot Miss Chris safely out of the dens of the lions."

"That will be conducive," said Sabrina. "Ah, dear Chandy ; how his pet expressions cling to one ; and Bertha shall go too ; our quartette must not be dissevered."

Filer pattered in, with her hands full of themes, to tell them that they were all invited to the great parlor at eight, to make welcome some new pupils, and was pattering away again, rubbing her red nose, when Chris seized on her, captured the papers, and made her listen to her plan.

"Go, my dear, by all means," said she ; "it will do you good ; and as for the book, it is a good book. It has cost me as many tears as it has given me nice laughs. Heigho, I am tired to death ! Here's a theme for a girl fifteen years old, on 'Winter.' 'Winter is the coldest season in the year. It snows in winter, and people have to stay in the house a good deal, and keep the doors shut, only when they go a-skating.' There ! what do you think of *that* for an original essay. Ah ! I shall never get another class which will make me as happy as yours."

"You will come away from school in a couple of years or so," said Chris. "I'll not leave you behind me ; no indeed ! Filey is mine ; I bought her with love. I shall be of age by and by, and I am going to carry you off, and see beautiful things. We'll travel up and down, a couple of unprotected females."

"That would be nice," said the little teacher, wiping her red eyes ; 'quite too nice for me, but it warms me up to know that somebody wishes for me ; it is such a long time since anybody has said 'dear' to me. Good-by—there's the supper bell ! That Jane Muchley and Miss Teazle 'll be picking each others eyes out if I'm not there to keep them in order ; you never saw such a pair of quarrelsome little wasps. Come ! what do *you* want?" she added, as a head appeared at the door. "There ! I 'old you so. Jane has been at it again ! I hope Madame will be satisfied with her experiment. I assured her those girls would never do here. You may report a cipher, Miss Teazle."

Filer walked off gimlet-eyed and rasping, and Chris felt heartily sorry for her overtaken nerves.

Peebles singled out his favorite as soon as her silver-gray robe floated into the drawing-room, and his pale face kindled a little at sight of the slender wearer, and he stopped to gather a Provence bud, which dropped from her breast-knot, as she glided in.

"Miss Goldsmith," he offered his arm whimsically, —

"Come spread your wings as I spread mine,
And leave this crowded hall
For where the eyes of twilight shine
On evening's winter wall ;"

being translated meaneth, let's we two get a quiet corner, and have a sensible chat. I despise dancing. It's all very well for ladies, in their trailing gowns, but I do hate to see a parcel of men hopping about like kangaroos. My father is a deacon

of the good old stamp, and I was brought up at the foot of Gamil-hill, but when I was a little shaver I took a notion that I must have a few lessons in the mazy whirl, and the old gentleman's eyes twinkled, when he told me 'I might get a couple of stout apple sprouts and come out to the barn, and he'd help me do all the dancing I wanted,' and I've lived long enough to respect his excellent judgment. Dervishes and Shakers dance upon principle; but I don't see what need brainy people have to amuse themselves with kicking up their heels, when there are so many rich mines of talk unworked. Look at my friend Dexter, now! where's the use of his spinning round that gait, making a pair of shears of himself?"

"Why, Mr. Peebles! aren't you in rather a bad humor this evening?" asked Chris, laughing. "Is the Chip-Basket in fault, or the Greek roots?"

"To tell the truth, Professor Noble has rasped my temper a little, nagging me over that infernal (I beg pardon Miss Goldsmith) impracticable, flying-machine. I don't intend to fly myself, and I don't care a groat how many pounds of air it takes to keep a man up, and push him along. There! — (as a waltzing couple hit his shoulder, and disturbed his centre of gravity) — "there! that's just the way; if you don't glue yourself to the plastering, somebody is always pitching into you."

"We will make haste and plant ourselves among the wall-flowers, Mr. Peebles, till you find your good-nature, which you have certainly mislaid in that unlucky flying-machine. You rail like a Kate. There's a time to dance, you know. I don't feel quite in the mood this evening; though I make it a religious duty to stand up whenever I am asked, I must say I don't dote upon the amusement."

They edged away into a cosy bow-window, and talked; and John Peebles' tired face cleared, and his overstrung nerves

relaxed ; and a genial humor playing freely with his subjects, took the place of his carping discontent, and in fact anybody but our preoccupied Chris, might have seen that he would come to the "old, old story," before many more sittings. They were interrupted in a spirited debate upon the "strong and gentle singer of the crusades," disagreeing in merry mood over his Tancred and rare Clorinda, by Madame, who came, wearing her hostess-face, and said to Chris with an odd mixture of respect and dislike.

"I have a duty for you, my dear. There's Mr. Fosdick, my new young gentleman. I want you to take pity upon the stranger, and make him feel at home. I hear from his friends that he is made of brains."

"But how shall I manage, Madame?" replied Chris accepting her office at once, and pleasantly, and returning the look she got with one of perfect, self-possessed dignity, neither retiring nor advancing.

"You must draw him out, my dear."

"Canst thou draw out the Leviathan with a hook," said Chris, whose eye caught Sabrina's in that unlucky instant, and whose soul fled on wings to Sonsie, her needs and duties.

John Peebles' hearty laugh, and Madame's face, brought Chris back, and she hastened to signify her readiness to amuse the stranger, "all brains," but she stood up to dance with her disobedient thoughts still busy, and the first number of the "Caledonians" was over, before she awakened to the fact that the parter was looking at her, and that she had, as yet, made no effort to draw him out.

"Was Zoroaster an Egyptian or a Persian?" asked she.

The moulinet hindered any reply, except a stare; and in the next pause, she returned to her conversational duties.

"Which of the Ptolemys was Cleopatra's brother?"

"I haven't any idea, Miss, I'm sure," answered the brainy man, beginning to look alarmed, and she finished him off *teetotally*, by saying in the next rest, —

"Who preceded Heliogabulus among the Emperors?"

As soon as the quadrille was finished, Mr. Fosdick made haste to hand his partner to a seat, and he watched her narrowly, from remote corners of the room, the remainder of the evening.

"Chris, Chris! what have you been about?" asked Sabrina, who had been near enough to hear her rather remarkable efforts at making the stranger feel at home.

"Why, I've been 'drawing out' that long-legged monster over there by the window, as Madame directed me, and I got nothing for my trouble beyond 'yes and no.' He follows the precept too closely, 'let your communications be yea, yea, and nay, nay.' "But I wash my hands of him. I've done my duty faithfully, and, by the way, Sabrina, where do you suppose my Sonsie will be classed here?"

CHAPTER XIX.

SONSIE GOES TO CONFESSION.

THE Ulster maiden was sitting in dust and ashes, figuratively speaking, being down upon the floor in Ruth Blair's kitchen, with her apron over her head weaving back and forth, sobbing and moaning. Ruth found her in this penitential attitude, when she came in from her walk with Pigeon.

"Why, Sonsie, what has happened?" she asked in alarm.

Sonsie thrust out an open letter without removing her veil.

"'Tis Miss Chris, who's been writin' to me. She says I'm sinful, wicked, ungrateful, and fly in the face of Providence, that has raised me up powerful friends."

"She does! Why, what have you been about, Sonsie, to deserve such hard words at the hand of our kind Chris?"

"Leastways, she says it will be all that, if I don't put me pride in me pocket, and make meself a debtor for life to Mrs. Vedder, and niver be able to hold up me head any more."

"That's very odd, Sonsie; it don't sound like Chris."

"Read the letter, please, Miss Ruthie, and see if ye don't find it all there."

Ruth ran her eyes down the page, and rattled it back into its folds, full of eager enthusiasm.

"And so you have a chance to make a woman of yourself! Go down on your knees directly, and thank God for his great goodness!"

Sonsie pulled down her apron, and gazed upon her mistress an instant.

"Will ye plase say them words again, Miss Ruthie?"

Ruth did say them, and even stronger than before, and made the girl tell her the whole story.

"I'll go immediately and see Mrs. Vedder myself," said she, excitedly, "and talk it over with her; and I only hope your foolish conduct has not disgusted her, and so shut up her heart that she will refuse to listen to me."

Sonsie looked about her as one looks down a precipice over which he has got to leap; and then she searched Ruth's face, and found only stern determination there. She rose, set her arms akimbo, and turned her head over her shoulder.

"No, me mistress; I'll even go meself! Me two friends, — me white angel and me good Miss Ruth, — ye'd surely do

me no wrong ; ye can't know the bitter taste of dependence I'll swallow the dose ; but if I must give up my freedom, I'll throw it down at Mrs. Vedder's feet meself ! I'll not be dragged to her like the prisoners Ollam Folda had chained to the tail of his horse those times."

Ruth was amused, beneath her anxiety, by Sonsie's manner ; but she took care to keep a serious countenance.

"Go, then, without delay, and do your work thoroughly."

Jan came in, and found the Milesian neatly habited, and just drawing on her gloves.

"Whither away, Sonsie ?" asked he.

"I'm goin' to confession," she replied, darting a resentful side-glance at him. "Ye can come along wid me, for a young heretic, and see how a true Catholic makes a clean breast of her sins. Ye'll have no call for yer teasin' talk, — 'Ollam Folda,' and those, — I'm goin' to put my soul into yer mother's hand, and let her do anything she wants wid it. D'ye mind that now !"

Jan threw a puzzled look at Ruth, beneath which there was a gleam of exultation he was afraid of showing.

"She intends to be a very good child, Mr. Vedder, and beg to be sent to school," said Ruth, smiling.

"Ah ! you have seen the folly of it, and are about to eat a slice of humble-pie. I remember you once treated me to a goodly portion. *I* found it wholesome. I can recommend the regimen."

"I'll have a pretty little mother confessor, anyhow."

"But you can't touch me there ; I had a beauty."

If the young fellow hoped for any pleasure from his walk to Brookedge, by the side of the girl who stepped off so fleetly, he was disappointed, for she threw him nothing but jeers and short answers the whole way. Mrs. Vedder was reading in

her easy-chair, with Polly Ann Maria on the arm, and Rainbow and Flirt on the rug before the wood fire.

"Ye can stop there by the door, Mr. Vedder, sir," said SONSIE shortly to the young heir; and "'twould do ye no harm to pater a few prayers for yer own sins, while I am gettin' me shrift."

She walked proudly up to the amazed little lady, and dropped upon her knees before her, looking straight into her eyes.

"Will ye please let me go-to-school-at-yer-expinse, ma'am, and-make-me-yer-debtor-and-slave, till-such-time-as-I'm-able-to-pay-it-again?"

Although much amused by the rapidity of the high-keyed, one-toned utterance, Mrs. Vedder was also a good deal moved. She fully comprehended the struggle which the girl had passed through, and valued it as it deserved. Her son was standing expectantly in the door, where he had been bidden to tarry and pray; and she smiled at him before she took SONSIE's rosy chin into her jewelled fingers, and questioned the honest eyes which grew violet velvet deep beneath her gaze; and she was exceeding glad, and kissed her warmly.

"Wilt thou also come to my home and be my good daughter, thou brave child?" said she, softly and slowly. "Say 'yes' quickly, and make us both happy — me and my Jan."

The young man took a step forward, and SONSIE rose to her feet proudly erect, her full bust out, and her round, fresh-colored arm, from which the loose, black sleeve fell away, extended independently toward him.

"I'm a grateful girl, Mrs. Vedder," said she. "I pray God that he'll let me live to prove it. I'll take thankfully the nand ye kindly reach down to me, and I'll put me soul into the work ye offer, and try hard to be a credit to me purty patron; but

I'm a servant, now, ma'am ; I've took a place wid Miss Walsingham, as her maid, till she comes from New York ; I'm to work for her wages ; *that's* me home just now. If I was another girl, that hadn't been where I was, she might accept yer goodness, and slip easily into the station ye offer. But ye remember, ma'am, we talked a good bit, one day, over that same, and I laid me soul bare to you."

"Very well, my dear ; you may do your duty then ; I will not trouble you any more," replied Mrs. Vedder, as if the service plan were no news to her. "I also shall come in, I hope, for a share of your kind offices on the journey, because my Jan and I are to be of your party. I love, of all things, to be read to sleep by a sweet young voice, Sonsie. You should be a rare reader, with the delicate tones you are always giving — the ups and downs. There's wonderful variety to you."

"Miss Zoe spake of yer going, ma'am ; and ivery thing me two hands can do, I'll do joyfully. Me heart is yours intirely."

Jan came striding up. "Stop to supper, Sonsie," said he. "Mother'll give us Dutch pancakes with honey, and olykoeks ; and we'll have a game of billiards while we are waiting."

"Yes, indeed, my dear child, you must stop, because I have to speak with you about my plans. You are to be a school-girl, and my ward, as soon as you have finished the service with Zoe, and there are arrangements to perfect."

"Polly, put the kettle on, and we'll all have tea," said the green parrot, launching her order at Scnsie, and changing her eyes into balls of fierce orange light.

"She knows quite well, does yon burrd, which is the servant amongst us three, ma'am," said Sonsie, with provoking brightness, as she took off her hat and cloak and hung them tidily upon the rack, and prepared, with clear-eyed attention, to take up any occupation which her hostess offered her ; and

both mother and son felt that she never for one moment forgot her valuation of herself, or the plan of life she had marked out for her future, though she was sprightly, witty, modestly-bold, through it all. She had never seen a billiard-table in her life; but while Jan explained the game, and made some shots, she watched him with the concentrated attention she was capable of, and, inspired by the desire she had to do every thing she saw others do, and rather surpass them if possible, she comprehended and took up a cue with the utmost confidence in her power to succeed, and made such a good game that Jan declared she must be a secret votary of the art, and might instruct her teacher.

"Indade, Mr. Vedder, ye were liting so merrily while I played, that me balls could not choose but rin gaily home to yer music; and I never took a whiff of me breath to help it either, as I saw you doing just now, when the red one tarried on the edge of the pocket, like a burrd on the rim of its nest, till ye just blew it in."

His mother laughed, and told him it was only her bright eyes and steady nerves that helped her out. "Sonsie is a good child, I know, and takes kind care of the temple God has shrined her soul in," said she.

Jan laid down the cue softly, and walked away with so sorrowful a countenance that the quick-witted, sympathetic girl guessed his thought, and went after him, and engaged him in such a sharp dispute, and got so signally beaten, that he was in harmony with himself again, and then the three had a charming supper together.

"You see, mother, it was that first kiss which spoiled my game," said Jan.

"A kiss spoils a life, sometimes, my boy," she replied; and Jan looked at Sonsie, and wondered if she remembered how he

had wished to touch her lips, on the hill, that day, and saw in her face that she had forgotten nothing; and he would have given anything, done anything, to blot it out from her thoughts. Afterwards he left his mother and his love sitting close to the piano, on which the fairy lady played Irish reels to the young maid, and sang old ballads loved in her youth: "The Captive Knight," "The Blue Moselle," "The Troubadour." She gave them but once, and Sonsie owned them afterwards; could reproduce them at her pleasure. Jan had business, he said, with his church committee, and would return and attend the guest home in proper season.

Mrs. Vedder talked school, and mentioned Rosenbloom.

"Ah! Miss Chris is there," said Sonsie, kindling up.

"Yes, my child." Mrs. Vedder saw gladly how the warm heart of her protégé glowed with love for her first friend, and she smiled. "That, in fact, is a great reason why I fixed upon the school for you. It is, besides, the choicest one I know, both for pupils and teachers. Some of the best blood in the country is there; and you will meet culture and grace and fashion, as well as scholarship. Madame Groenveldt has comprehensive ideas of what a school should be, and she carries them out magnificently. You can't help getting on, every way."

Sonsie listened, with her eyes upon her hostess' face, and replied, —

"I can make those fine people to be most useful to me, indeed. A teacher ought to use all ways to get good manners. It gives them power, that I know. And still, I'll keep myself so quiet, that they'll niver dream I'm observing 'em. In the Bible, it says, 'be with 'em, but not of 'em.' That's jist me case, isn't it, ma'am?"

'Though the girl's face and manner were not particularly

promising for the elaboration of her plans, Mrs. Vedder went on talking fast and talking well ; but she could find no words, no caresses, which would induce her to entertain for a moment an intention to accept an outfit. When she was tenderly implored to afford her hostess the pleasure of being kind, the young girl seized the small hand which sought hers, and covered it with kisses, and poured out a flood of eloquence, half sobs, half blessings, and was as firm as a rock.

"I'm going to school by yer kindness, Mrs. Vedder. Miss Chris and me mistress says 'tis the right thing for me to put me life into yer purty hand. I don't look like dyin' ; do I ma'am ?"

She straightened herself before the little lady, and threw back her shoulders.

"Not much, Sonsie, my dear ; at least, not at this present minute."

"I think I *shall* live ; I've prayed that I may, and I believe I shall somehow get back me independence again, along of yer goodness. I can't just see how, but I think it will be given me. Just put yersel' in me place, ma'am, as much as a true-born lady can feel the same as a poor Irish lass, and ye'll see that though I do be thankful for the chance I'm gettin', it is not right for me to take gifts to plaze me vanity — dresses and things — and ye'll never be offended, I'm sure. I'll sell me little black pig, and I'll save me wages that I earn with Miss Zoe, and I'll be decent and trim ; and that is all I need. I've a good plan for earning money in the holidays, that'll stead me through."

Mrs. Vedder gave up in despair, and dreaded to acknowledge her failure to her son ; and after the young people had left her for their walk to the Horseshoe by moonlight, she sat and turned the subject about and about in her thoughts,

till she clapped her hands in glee over her happy inspiration; the first step of which was to establish an acquaintance with Ruth, and she considered herself justifiable in invading her privacy in such a cause; and the two ladies put their heads together, and plotted like Jesuits or women.

One day, not long after Sonsie's visit to Brookedge, Ruth took occasion to tell her a story of her own school experience.

Sonsie heard her attentively, and looking at the pretty woman who talked, she had little trouble to fill up her word-pictures, of a young, blooming, modest little orphan, in poor garments, slighted and ridiculed by the riders of the ponies, and the wearers of silken robes and gauds; and she answered indignantly, but with undaunted mien, —

"'Tis thrue for ye, Miss Ruthie! and I'd like to choke the nasty villains for threaten' ye so, and ye a nicelittle lady yersel'. But I know who I am. I go to school for the idication, and sorra a fling they'll iver get at me, at all, at all, through me kapin mesel' to mesel', intirely."

When Ruth changed her ground, and lectured severely upon the sin of flying in the face of Providence, and being stiff-necked and ungrateful, Sonsie turned white as a ghost, and her eyes grew velvet violet, while she thought, and then she came out clear, confident as ever.

"I cannot see that, Miss Ruthie. 'Tis no duty, sure, to dress fine, at another's cost, when there isn't a chance for me ivir in the world to pay the debt. If it was you, now, I'd be joyful to take yer favors; yer like the dear little mother to me, only yer too winsome to be ary kin at all; but the gentlefolks down at Brookedge, they're just strangers. 'Tis me only chance for a real respectable idication, and I've given in to it, and I'm goin' to be thankful. Please leave off tormentin' a poor girl any

more, and tell Mrs. Vedder *never* to spake again to me of clothes."

Mrs. Blair confided her convictions to Jan's mother, who spoke hopefully to her son, but *she* was every day less confident of his success. The more she saw of the firm, strong nature of this girl, who counted all her steps, the more thoroughly she was convinced that her boy would have no chance with her but what love would give him. Gratitude, respect, she found in her, and plenty of amusing mother wit, and she somehow knew for certain that Sonsie Eagan had got to love with all the strength of her bountiful nature, when she gave up her coy, independent soul to the keeping of a husband. It was evident, while she watched the two together, that no dream of love had ever ruffled the waves of her being. She was easy and pleasant with Jan, in a certain way, and always talked unreservedly with him, but it was, as he said, "across a gulf." However, Mrs. Vedder kept her knowledge to herself, and hoped every thing from the four years she had planned for her protégé at Rosenbloom.

CHAPTER XX.

THY LOVE IS BETTER THAN WINE.

JAN and Peter had got the baggage checked, and their womenfolk in good places. The cars were skurrying along "through bush and brake, and past the waving corn," (only the corn wasn't planted yet), and of course they were to pick up Sabrina and Chris ; it being, as Zoe observed, just a few days out of their way.

Our Chris received Sonsie with such kisses and smiles, that Jan Vedder held his breath to see, and when it came his turn, to take her hand, he could not help putting it to his lips. The pupils looked on astonished; none of them had ever gotten such a demonstration; even Zoe came in only second best; but not one of her friends comprehended the mixed emotions which swelled within her. When her love was new, the happiest hours were mixed up with Sonsie Eagan. She had promised the lass a home in Otho Groenveldt's house; all the tenderness and joy of those days awoke! and she fell upon her neck and wept. Sonsie needed no better endorsers. Sabrina's elegance, Zoe's wit, and Christabel's scholarship, opened the gates royal wide, and though, when she really became an inmate of the place, she was made to suffer some slings and arrows of outrageous girls, *this* day was all rose color, and she longed for the time to arrive when she could begin, and conquer a place for herself.

Chris seized on the young maid eagerly, with excited countenance, and bore her off to red-nosed, gimlet-eyed Filer, who declared that she was "tired to death of striving with the potsherds of the earth" (meaning stupid scholars), and who, after having given a parting cypher to the last of the potsherds, sank back with a weary sigh, dreading to undertake a new lot.

"Here, you good Filer," said she, "I've brought you something! a *rara avis*! an emerald! pure and clear! a soul unspotted, and as sweet as a rose, and she's my friend, but I'll let you share in her love. We are to have her here; not among your potsherds, though, because I'll tell you a secret — she's got the most wonderful gift of story-telling, and the richest brogue. She'll weave you tales that will make you wipe your eyes, and sob for sorrow. She thirsts for knowledge; she'll work like a cart-horse or a beaver; you may stuff her, Filer, cram her, and

she'll go down on her knees and thank you. Here, Sonsie, show how your eyes can laugh ; there ! did you ever see the like of that ? This is my teacher, my good, dear, friend, and she's going to be yours. She nursed me when I was sick, and such toast as she can make. Come here, Sonsie, and kiss Miss Filer, directly."

The amused Celt obeyed instantly, taking in the situation, and comprehending the character offered her at once, and Chris put her arms around them both, and thrust her head between, and kissed two cheeks, one rosy and tempting, and the other, thin, wrinkled, and old, and it were hard to tell which of the two recipients felt most pleasure in her affection.

"Here !" said she, seizing a bundle of themes the teacher held, "I'm to do those, and you're to get your candle out by ten o'clock this night, or I shall give you a failure — yea, a cypher, Filer."

CHAPTER XXI.

SONSIE LEARNS THE DUTIES OF A MAID.

THE St. James ! the quietly elegant, the luxuriously comfortable ! the prince of hotels ! Who knoweth the perfection of the gregarious living which Americans delight in so thoroughly, as the favored ones who have basked in thy enjoyments. A glance into thy "tea-room," as you turn the Broadway corner, is suggestive of entrées and piquant sauces. A going up thy broad staircase, to the apartments above, is travelling toward Paradise. After life's fitful fever, you sleep well ; you rise refreshed ; you ring your bell, and you

get it answered. "Make a note on't," ye travellers, and your fresh towels and soda water never linger. You descend to breakfast through spacious halls, so dimly quiet that you seem to be the only inhabitant of an enchanted palace. You are ushered in by a gentleman in full dress, waving a white napkin instead of a wand. You are waited upon by another gentleman, also in full dress, who evidently considers you the only party in the house worthy his attention; and while the beloved concentrates his energies upon the task of picking out a choice breakfast, you glance into the "World," which you have just purchased of the bland boy in the grand office, dreading what the fearful critic may have been about while men slept; and just as your eyes are fastened upon the book-table, you hear cordial voices at your elbow, and southern accents which syllable your name, and you instantly rise to be greeted as only those whole-souled people *do* greet a friend; and you plunge into a sea of talk about the old plantation days, their horse-back rides and frolics about New Orleans, the orchestral concerts at Odd Fellow's Hall, the nights at the French Opera, when the boxes sparkled in jewels and lovely flower-adorned women; the promenades on Canal street, the gorgeous children in "riotous needle-work," their gay-turbaned nurses, the sweet-faced, simple-mannered maidens; and you inquire, with a regretful sigh, if there be still requiems and masses in the old French cathedral; flowers in Jackson Square; *mardi-gras* mummings in carnival time; and if the "Mystic Krew of Komus" still makes the street a spectacle, with their wondrous transformations, and you faintly whisper a fear that the dear, gay old city is named "Ichabod," since the reign of the great spooney one.

Zoe hated to give up her quarters at her favorite Metropolitan; but when she learned that the Florences were in Europe,

and the "dear delightful" "Ticket-of-Leave Man" "played out," and Niblo's stage full of half-naked women and red and blue fire, she left off pouting her lips, "cherry ripe and provoking," and gave in to sturdy Peter; and after a day in her rooms, the St. James was her hotel, and the Metropolitan no more to her forever.

Their party had a whole hall to themselves, with a parlor in their midst, looking into Broadway's ever-shifting sights, the toilers and the idle; and the chimes of the church behind them played sweet hymns, and called them to come and pray. SONSIE found her maid's place a sinecure, from the moment of leaving Roaring River; and so busy were they all talking together, that Jan made it easy to drop into a seat by the side of the girl he loved, and for whose pleasure and profit he was taking the journey.

The two little mammas sat cosily in front of them chatting, and being appealed to and petted by the whole party; so he amused himself with pointing out all objects of interest, and inventing fabulous tales of Irish romance, and twisting his Dutch tongue into her brogue, and enjoying to the full his accustomed teasing, provoking talk, and her ready, piquant replies; and he was in absolute good humor; being one of those rare gentlemen who love to engineer a party, and who take easily all the disagreements of travel, and make the most of its pleasures; who never lose any baggage, mistake any routes, nor abuse porters or hackmen, and are never betrayed into saying "mill-dam" under the most aggravatingly provoking concatenation of circumstances.

Poor Chris had a hard day for her first, in the cars, trying to dominate and keep under her memories. Her only other journey had been so thrilling sweet. Her eyes would fill sometimes, in spite of her efforts to listen and seem attentive to John Pee-

bles' sensible talk. Oh, the intolerable bitter of the *to seem*, when the *to be* has been wrecked in a life-storm. Still, I think, none of them observed any want in her. Even John, himself, whose eyes found ever-renewing food for contemplation in her face, never guessed how her hungry soul longed for a little taste of its old happiness. Good, quiet Bertha sat apart. She heard Zoe's talk with Sabrina,—“silks, poplins, point-lace, and cashmeres,”—it had little significance to her. She was thinking of a handsome boy who threw oranges into her lap, and, with her veil down, she indulged herself in recalling every word and look Chandy had given her that day; and she remembered also Chris's saying, “We know that women may love, and never marry.”

The girls flitted from room to room, while the luggage was coming up, and looked through each other's windows; and Sonsie, as soon as she found which was to be Zoe's room, began putting up her things, and was just going for the keys to take out the dresses, when Mrs. Vedder peeped in.

“My daughter” (she seemed to take intense pleasure in the word), “come with me. I must have your room next mine, because I like being read to sleep, you know, and your voice is sweet and pleasant to my ear; and I've fetched along ‘Legends of Ireland,’ to begin with, till you and I have an opportunity to take a turn among the bookstores and find something nice and new.”

“Oh, yes, Mrs. Vedder, as soon as Miss Zoe has dismissed me, I'll be there gladly.”

That young lady came flying along, and gave Sonsie a little push.

“Go!” said she, “get ready for dinner; I need not say ‘make yourself nice,’ because you are always that, and I know

you will never keep anybody waiting : I wish I could say as much for myself."

The lassie was about to speak of the keys and her duties, but she changed her mind and did as she was bid.

Mrs. Vedder's room opened into Sonsie's ; but the door was shut between them, and nobody intruded upon her privacy, while she arranged her trifles upon the table, and laid out her Bible and prayer-book, walking briskly and enjoyingly about the place, examining every thing, and turning over the events of the journey. She was well pleased, too, with herself, in her spotless black gown, clear white cuffs and little collar, and she tied back her hair with a bright green ribbon, and looked as fresh as a rose. She had been gazing, for a quarter of an hour, down upon the street, wondering if the hand-organ, which the one-armed fellow ground at so industriously, made any noise, because none reached her elevated position ; and thinking about a houseful of street-musicians, and strolling children, she and Dennie used to know ; and of the hard times they had ; the beatings and starvation ; and of the offer she had got once to travel with a handsome, wicked young Italian stroller, with whom she had lilted and danced, and who played a harp, and of the free, gay days he had promised her under the trees, among the hay-ricks (which had killed her friendship for him) ; and then of Jan Vedder and his Irish harp,—Jan, who had said, "I'd willingly put the world behind me to live such a life in your company, Sonsie !" — and she dropped upon her knees before the white bed, and covered her face with her hands. I cannot tell the color of her thoughts, nor what manner of petitions she offered ; but I know that when there came a soft tap at her door, and she composedly rose, her lashes were wet, and her heart was strong and brave. Chris stood before the opened porte, in her rosy gray dress and musk-rose breast-knot ;

and she floated through into Sonsie's arms. She grasped in her hand a bunch of damask buds, which she held up to the Ulster maiden's face, and smiled.

"Just the color of your cheeks," said she, "and smell how they have the odor of Paradise. I shall fasten them into your bonny green snood, and every breeze that kisses them will toss you down a thought of me. I can give you no more flowers after these, which, you see, my dear Papa Groenveldt put me into waxen mittens; because he knows I love a blossom in my breast; but they will all droop before to-morrow. My good, good Sonsie! how I rejoice! how glad I am for you! I have had no privacy, as yet, in which to say how happy it makes me to know that you are to be mine in Rosenbloom, my very own! I know, quite well, that you can never feel toward any other girl as you feel toward me; your eyes tell me how pleasant I am to you. You never look at anybody else as you look at me, and I am very glad. Your intense loving nature is such a marvellously gorgeous treasure-queen, who gives royally and blesses in bestowing as also in receiving. Ah! how you will adore a husband, some of these days! But mind, I'm first. I know I am *one and all* to-day; then I shall be only *somewhat*. Oh, how often I have wished for your strong arms to fold me in loving clasp, and to rest my head just here, where I can hear your true heart beat."

Sonsie rained kisses upon the chestnut curls which swept her shoulders, and she held rosy-tipped fingers in her supple ones, over which she breathed such words as a devotee murmurs to her patron saint; and after a little Chris stood up and put her hands upon the young girl's shoulders, and studied her, thinking of her as Jan Vedder's wife in her "absolute perfection of bodily health, and her full capacity for mental perfectability;" and she intuitively felt that Jan was wiser than his fellows.

Pretty soon, a sound of shutting doors, of keys turned in the locks, and subdued voices approached; and the mothers and young girls came dressed for dinner, accompanied by the gentlemen. Zoe stuck her head into her maid's room.

"Come, Sonsie!" said she, crisply; "come; we are going down now. Yes, of course, all dressed! I knew you were not what Peter calls irreverently, 'Procrastinating titivator.' Oh, dear! why couldn't I have such a skin, instead of this Spanish brown coating, like a harvest girl, or a *contadina*."

"Why, Zoe!" began Peter, remonstratingly, and most admiringly.

"Oh, yes, I know! Peter does me the compliment to say *he* could not have fancied me a shade different. I suppose I ought to be satisfied; and I am really,—Peter, don't look so utterly extinguished,—only that Sonsie is so provokingly milk-white; bring her along, Chris!"

Zoe laid her hand upon Peter's arm, and treated it to just one little squeeze, and a glance which sank into his heart; and Sonsie stepped back, with her head up.

"No, dear Miss Chris, it is not seemly for me, *the maid*. I know it is not the fashion of those great places; I must not forget me station; folks might happen think me a lady."

Chris's arm stole around her firm waist. "O proud humility!" whispered she. "Let me hear no more such words as those; we count our Sonsie a gentlewoman of God's kind creation, and 'tis for you to prove us right; therefore come at once and do your mistress' bidding."

Sonsie looked into the speaker's eloquent face, and her deepening violet eyes were lustrous with thoughts; and she threw a swift glance at the group about the door, which lighted for a flash upon Jan and his little blooming lady-mother; Jan in

easy-fitting suit of travelling-gray, and she in rustling silk, who were both watching her ; and she advanced at once.

"Yes, Miss Zoe," said she in her modest-bold way, "I am at your service ; may I carry your mantle ?"

"Certainly not. I have full use of my arms, and if I hadn't I should pack my luggage on to Peter ; that's why I permitted him to come."

"I thought such offices were part of a maid's duty, Miss Zoe."

"That is a particular and complete misapprehension of yours, Sonsie."

"Will you please instruct me, then, Miss Zoe, so that I may blunder no more ?"

"Oh yes, willingly, Sonsie. First and foremost, your duty is to eat a good dinner ; that finished, I will farther unfold to you your responsibilities."

Peter looked at his fiancée in admiring wonder, and Jan took care to become immediately absorbed in conversation with his mother, which made him turn his shoulder upon the talkers, but which did not hinder his taking possession of the Ulster maiden, at the door of the tea-room, and placing her by the side of the fairy matron, who beckoned her joyfully saying, "Come, my daughter, here by me ;" and Chris wished to take a chair also at the little table, but was hindered by Peebles, who, smiling, begged her to get her dinner with him, while she explained her idea of the "function for cognizing juxtaposition, and the function for cognizing an inherent concretion ;" and Zoe made a horrible face, and said disgustedly, —

"Oh, do ! you two take a table all to yourselves ; I've to go to-morrow morning, down to Lord & Taylor's to look at silks and velvets, and decide upon other matters of vital importance,

and I don't choose to have what little brains I've got addled by any such learned nonsense."

And the bland gentleman in full dress, who had been politely waiting their time, did show the two to a small niche in the corner, where there was a gilded shelf for the finger-bowls and doylies, which made a capital place for their books, and where they proceeded to talk it out "on that line;" though they agreed better as to dinner-edibles than abstruse doctrines, for both ate the simplest fare the bill afforded, and both drank water from the Croton. After dinner was over, Sonsie went up and took Chris's hand reverently, and led her to her apartment, and shut the door.

"Miss Chris," said she, "what makes a lady?"

Chris replied readily, and wonderfully pleased, —

"Purity, truth, delicacy, culture, and it may be, purple blood; but *that* is as God wills;" and as Sonsie held her to a clear definition of her words, she gave it fully, distinctly. The attentive lassie thanked her, kissed her hand, and went away to her own room and conned over what she had got.

"There's the O'Roukes for the purple blood. Purity! The Bible says, Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. *That* means in heaven; or no — it means that the pure shall be able to find the purity that God has put into his creatures. I see it in the face of me white angel. Truth. I've got *that* in me soul. Holy Mother be thanked! Delicacy." She thought a long time over that, and shook her head despairingly. Then her eyes deepened and cleared. "I'll ask the dear Christ! And the culture," — here she set her arms more Hibernico, — "I'll work up the culture for meself as far as it lies in me to find it, thanking God and me kind friends."

She tied on her hat, and knocked at Zoe's door. "I'm goin down to the church beyant, wid the sweet-voiced chimes, to

say me prayers, mistress," said she, smiling, "if ye've no service to keep me."

"Sonsie, come in here," ordered Zoe imperiously; "shut the door! Now listen! I've got a great deal on my mind; I'm going to be married, and I must be able to concentrate my energies upon my business; I say once for all, don't speak that word 'mistress' to me again! I won't bear it. I know you do it in fun, but I can't see the joke. You shall be my friend; you shall not dare to mention service to me, except such as one young girl offers another. I thought your good sense would make all this clear to you, but I see it needs jogging. You may fasten my gloves and button my boots, and you may kiss me when you've finished, and I'll do the same for you. 'Tis of no use for you to open your eyes at me, or toss your head, nor get your arms akimbo — that, by the way, is a shocking habit; not that it ill-becomes *you*, but you'd better drop it. You might twiddle your thumbs whenever you feel it necessary to give vent to your feelings. You see, Sonsie, my dear girl, we are too many for you; you shall be one of us — a Roaring River girl — we *are* nice! We all like you, and you are to go to school. I am so glad of that, Sonsie; and Sabrina is rejoiced too, and Bertha, and mamma, and Peter! Of course you can dodge off into a missionary field, or crop out into a teacher, or go for a Sister of Mercy, if you like, when your four years are up; but till then you are under bonds, and you must come harmoniously into the place you have promised to fill. Now go and pray as much as you think is good for you. Pray for me, Sonsie, and my Peter," she added, her eyes full of tears, and she rushed at the girl who was keeping under all feeling while she listened, and kissed her. "There, go," she finished, pushing her off, "and when you come back you'll leave your

rebellious face behind you and look sweet at me, and we'll all go and see the pictures together."

"Yes, Miss Zoe, thank you. It is main strange, I think. Ye hired me to be yer maid, and I consented to take the service, and I'm going to be a good faithful maid. You told me there was plenty to do."

"So there is; more than we can accomplish; good work, educating work."

"But, Miss Zoe, I think ye had no right —"

"I know a maiden fair to see — take care!
She can both cross and friendly be — beware!"

Won't you kiss me, Sonsie?"

Zoe put up her cherry ripe mouth; Sonsie looked at it, and at her black eyes, full of wilful mischief, and also brimming over with pretty kindness, and the clear blue in her own deepened into violet, and her face was all white as she lifted Zoe's brown fingers to her lips and walked proudly away.

"I'll not mar the pleasure of your fairing time by any humors, Miss Zoe," she thought; "no more will I forget meself 'Twas kindly meant, I'm sure, but I'm Sonsie Eagan! all yer fine words and all yer intentions can't change me. 'Delicacy and culture!' they're not mine; the mud of the streets clings to me garments; but since ye will it so, I'll take it as a gift from Heaven, and be thankful for a bit of a good time."

CHAPTER XXII.

EINES FREUNDES STIMME.

ALL but the two mammas, who were too fatigued for any further exertion, and preferred a quiet chat in the great parlor, agreed to spend the evening at the Dusseldorf Gallery, and two young fellows were certainly very happy during that walk — I think I might say three, perhaps. Jan Vedder had Sonsie Eagan on his arm. It had never happened before, much as he had walked about the country in her company; and when he got the round, supple member to rest lightly on his coat-sleeve, he felt as if he had made a long stride toward his wishes. There was a certain brisk power in the tap of Sonsie's firm foot, and an enjoying outlook from her deep, clear eyes, which made it a pleasure to walk by her side, and the two stepped out as though a ten or twenty mile walk would be play to them; but Mr. Jan hardly knew his ground, nor the spirit which possessed the soul of the Ulster maid, who had not yet digested her meditations upon Christabel's "lady."

Chris walked with John Peebles, and let him talk about concretions and juxtapositions; and, as an hour with Miss Goldsmith was the highest form of happiness John Peebles knew, when enriched by metaphysics and Greek roots, he more than enjoyed it.

A *Venus de Mer*, near the entrance of the gallery, fixed Chris's eyes, and sent her thoughts back to the old studio, and the sittings she had given her papa for his golden-haired picture of the sea-shell goddess; and she was still standing before it when Sonsie came back to her.

"O dear Miss Chris! is there niver any Irish painting amongst the whole of these?"

"No, Sonsie; there have been Irish painters, -- Joe Ellis, for instance, -- who 'personified the very cream of Hibernian good nature.' He was an original fellow, too; studied his subjects as seemed to him good, and imitated nobody. He went up to London full of Irish life and hope, and wit and frolic, and he finished some good pictures, and got some success and a little money, till he fell in with a crafty rogue, who duped him out of his best efforts, under the character of friend; and afterward, till he died in poverty, he slaved for picture-dealers, and repeated endless views of Venice, which were colored and sold for antiques. He was a gifted gentleman, but he lacked prudence and foresight, 'small loss' and 'divil may care,' being favorite comments of his upon great misfortunes."

"Just as Mr. Jan said," thought Sonsie; "Irish folks are always jumping into bramble-bushes. I'll not do that same."

"Then there was that Elmere," went on Chris, "who painted a dreadful picture of Marie Antoinette facing the mob of the Tuileries. It would keep sleep from your pillow to look at, Sonsie; so we won't talk about it. Then there was -- let me see -- one Maclise, of Cork; he painted the 'Origin of the Harp.'"

"Yes!" exclaimed Sonsie, -- her quick cheery way of uttering this monosyllable when she was pleased, is indescribable, -- "the Irish harp, is it, Miss Chris? Mr. Vedder says I should have one of those."

"I quite approve," answered Chris, sedately. "After you have studied the piano it might be an excellent plan. You've such pretty hands and arms, and you will despise the sore fingers and the blisters. Zoe tried it and she got disgusted the first week, and kept her digits in glycerine, and grumbled and scolded for a whole month; but *she* used to have creeping fits when her finger nails hit the piano keys. Sabrina often teases

her over the fusses she made, and the flat mode of execution she persisted in through all her early practice, because of the cold chills it gave her (poor sensitive little Zoe !), and the frantic rages of her teacher."

"Sensitive Zoe !" repeated Sonsie to herself, going over her recent conversation ; " I wonder did I hurt her this day ? " She looked keenly at Chris, endeavoring to find out if she had any hidden meaning or warning or instruction.

" Mulready of Ennis — all I remember about him is a picture papa had called ' Idle Boys,' which he copied in a private gallery in London, and he made Chandos study it ever so long once, when he failed in his Latin. Dear papa could be so severe, and he expected such perfection of us ; and yet I never remember one cross look or single hasty word. Oh, how well I can recall the smell of the oils, and the flowers I was copying, in my water-colors, and how sorry I felt that papa was so displeased with Chandy. I believe I had most of the sorrow to myself, though, for Chandy always rose up under trouble like a popping Jack. Such rich, full, happy, happy days those were."

Chris roused herself with an effort.

" These pictures, Sonsie, are all the work of long-bearded, beer-drinking, pipe-smoking Dutchmen."

" Like me, for instance," said a voice at her elbow."

The tone pierced Chris's heart with an arrow from her bitter past. She wheeled about and was face to face with Dr. Max, Otho Groenveldt's friend. His hand was extended and his eyes, the color of a smoke-topaz, glimmered with joy. He took the fingers offered him, and with the other hand he caressed his yellow beard — a Dutch picture of rich content.

" What a lucky fellow I am, Mees Goldschmidt, to meet you, and find that you remember me and our valse at Rosenbloom that enchanted evening."

A pang clutched Christabel's heart, and blanched her face and Max went on speaking rapidly.

"I am off in a couple of days for Germany. I hope 'twas my good angel had me in convoy when I came idly to this place. I knew I was looking for something rich and choice, and I was just thinking of you, too, when I heard your voice. I never forget voices. I think we shall take them to heaven with us; of a certainty, no celestial harp can ever give us such dear music as *Eines Freundes Stimme*."

The young German's leonine eyes spoke his feelings so plainly that Chris withdrew her hand in trembling confusion. Max mistook her emotion, and read its signs to suit his wishes. Men are always making such mistakes.

"I was about to journey toward Rosenbloom, Mees Goldschmidt, to take leave of the Groenveldts and get news of my friend Otho, who has been a lost Pleiad to me ever since we parted at the station last Christmas, and also to have another valse with das fraulein Goldschmidt, or more truly one more small talk — for the talking was varee mooch more charming than the valsing,—and also to execute a commission I had for her, a sort of bequest which has been travelling in search of an owner, like Cinderella's slipper."

It was a painful half-hour for Chris, but full of fascination. Max's constant reference to Otho in his talk, and his evident delight in this chance meeting, which he expressed in his rich German and rather inverted English, and every flash of his yellow-brown eyes; his embarrassing inquiries about her life, and the vivid recollection he showed for every one of her looks and words in the great ball-room at Rosenbloom, stirred her pulses and sent her thoughts whirling among her memories in such giddy waves that her flushing color fled and came in

crimson gusts, and her wistful eyes got humid with unshed tears.

Sonsie stood modestly apart while they talked, weighing the young doctor in her mental balance, observant of his attitudes and gestures, insensibly comparing him with a young hunter she knew, and noting also her darling's demeanor; and, all unskilled as she was in love, she guessed the solution of the tumult of emotions which trembled over her and fluttered through her parted lips in sweet warm breath.

Before the others had made the tour of the inner galleries, he was gone, and they found the two young girls standing quietly before the great picture of "Desdemona listening to her Moor;" and Chris, with a tired face, was explaining the story in a low smooth voice to Sonsie, whose eyes never left the brown ones she loved. She wondered if she would speak of Max, knowing almost beforehand that she could not, and admired the ready attention and patient look she gave John Peebles, who descanted at length upon a series of Pompeian frescos he had been studying with a view to their mythological meaning, and which lasted him till they entered the St. James vestibule, and he had still something to say about it when they sat down to supper, when Jan rather "troubled the pool" of his thoughts by putting it to the assembled party whether or no they could fully agree with Antoinette Brown in her "denunciation of sentient but irrational natures constituted according to sentient or qualitative principles co-ordinated with mathematical ones, all alike incomprehensible to the irrational natures themselves;" which had the effect to hush up good John for the time; and while they were all laughing, Jan said, —

"What do *you* think, Sonsie?"

"I think you talk as clear as mud, sir."

"Thank you," replied he, slipping into the place next her;

"and now, then, the next point we'll make will be a good supper. What shall you and I have? Shall we order a chicken and trofles, or kidneys, champagne sauce, or potted shrimps, or —"

"An is it supper, sir, an' the clock goin' the half hour past eleven; I'd be grateful for a sup of milk, though, if I might get it —"

Jan laid down the bill.

"Better take the Croton without the chalk, Sonsie: that is a general rule; but I'll order some for you. I suppose they've got a farm of their own, these St. James folks, so we may get a pure article, and, apropos of milk, Peter and I are to examine some imported stock while we're here. You remember that farm we overlooked from the up-pasture? Well, I'm going to put some fine cattle upon that place."

"Have you found a tenant, sir?"

"I have my eye upon one now, Sonsie."

As he happened to be staring at Peebles, that young person remarked, —

"Thank you, sir. I am sure you do me too much honor. Cincinnatus went from the plow to the consulship, but I should be fearfully out of place on a farm, if you mean me."

"You, friend John! Why you'd be feeding the cows Greek roots instead of cabbages. I referred to my mind's eye, which is, at this moment, in Roaring River, admiring an active, tight-built chap, who is not afraid of any honest work."

"A nice, healthy, hearty, young Irishman, then. Isn't he, sir?" asked Sonsie, laughing.

"Well, yes. He does happen to be, and I'm going to put a lot of Irish cows on the farm, too. There's a drove of Kyloes just over down the bay. I want some of them. I'll bet a hat you don't know what I'm talking about, Miss Ollam Folda."

"You'd lose your wager, sir, for I happen to know quite well. The master of the mills had a pack of the little, short, thick, black creatures, tough and bold, and wild-eyed; they're no milker's butt, only fit for beef."

"Well, Sonsie, my new tenant will make his own beef. He is going to farm on enlightened principles; and he has got a good backer. I must have a couple of Kerry cows. I wish I had cut my eye-teeth when I had the chance to get those at Blarney Castle; three of them would give twenty-one gallons a day. That beats your Ayrshires all to flinders, eh! Peter!"

"Your statements are hollow, sir! as hollow as a pumpkin; give me Guernsey cows for my dairy — or Alderneys — or my noble Ayrshires — who milk pure cream."

"You are befogged, Peter, my boy — the little Kerrys supply all the conditions: in the first place, they only cost about five pounds; and they eat like women, just a sup and a taste of something nice and delicate. I'll have a Kerry bull anyhow — and six cows, and I shall buy some Kyloes; and then if I see any Ayrshires —"

"Very well, Jan; go ahead, my boy; we'll try it out this year, and take the merits of the sorts fairly. Did you hear Peter's last, Zoe? You know, I suppose, that he has been cutting off his maple lot, and has got about a thousand cords of the clear timber-stuff laid up straight by a rine, and he goes out every time he gets a spare minute, to worship his wood-pile. So last week he drove over in his light wagon and his new bays, and lo and behold! an old Goody Blake! gathering sticks from his treasure."

"Halloo, my beauty!" says gallant Peter; "what in thunder are you about?"

"Yaw, mien herr," replies Goody, stopping to stare at him, and resting her hands behind her back.

"You put back every stick of that maple onto the pile where you found it, or I'll have you arrested, you thieving o'd sinner."

"Yaw, mien herr," replies Goody, composedly; and lifting her fagot she threw it into Peter's wagon, and jumped in herself, and sat down on it with her back to the gentleman, and her legs hanging out, and wiped her face on her apron, and waited his convenience for driving on, with a mien of stolid satisfaction; and there she sat, and persisted in sitting, and sending regular replies of "Yaw, mien herr," to all his expostulations and abuse; and so our good Peter was fain to drive her and her booty to her own door; where she jumped off, backed her load, thanking him with a final "Yaw, mien herr."

"Is that story true, Peter?" pouted Zoe, not liking her lover to be the butt of anybody's fun but her own.

"Well, yes, it is true in the main; a little embroidered and worked up by Jan."

"You did wisely, Peter," said Sabrina; "think how frightful it would be, if, like young Harry Gill, your teeth should chatter — chatter still."

"Oh, I didn't grudge the old lady a few sticks of my wood, though I must say I think she might have picked up the chips that lay about by the bushel, instead of pitching into my handsome maple; but I felt as if it *was* rather crowding the mourners when she made me carry it home, and her atop of it."

"Those are very pretty sleeve-buttons of yours, Jan," said Chris, who saw that the story rankled in Zoe's mind.

"I think so," he replied, holding up his arm and exhibiting a Brazilian beetle set in Etruscan gold; "they're *first* cousins Sonsie, to the fire-flies who hunted out the two Irishmen. 'Mickie, Mickie,' says Pat, 'tis no use for us to cover in our

heads beneath the bedclothes; here's one of the kratures searchin' for us wid a lantern.'"

Though Sonsie laughed at the story and Jan's Dutch-Irish brogue, he helped himself to plenty of occupation, because she set at him to know all about lightning-bugs; what they were made of, and how they did it; and the young gentleman soon got out of his depth, and called Chris to his aid.

Sonsie enjoyed her sprightly way of picking up the subject; explaining that this is one of the exceptions in the insect-world, where the male usually absorbs all the beauty; for 'tis the female who goes glancing about like a pale-blue star, on summer-nights, and her mate is heavy, brown, and dull. She would ask no questions; Chris's eyes were so weary, and her good-nature so evidently an effort; and Bertha also, who knew every change in her friend's mobile face and her flexible voice, and had grown used to watch her in the weary days, when she was creeping slowly back from the Dark River into health, and who loved her with a twofold love.

Bertha came and laid her hands upon the talker's shoulders, and said it was time to go to rest. They had to wait for the elevator to come down: the steam was out, and the slow-moving monster creaked and grumbled as if tired out. And Chris leaned absently against the folding-door which shuts off the great breakfast-room from the office-hall. Three gentlemen were at a table within. They had finished their supper and were talking. Though they were too far off for Chris to catch the words, something in the tones stirred her agreeably — two dissimilar voices, both deep and rich; but in the sub-tones of the one who spoke most there was a certain glad ring — a sort of eager, expectant vibration — which set her thoughts roving, — "a cosy, quiet room — a ticking clock in the corner — a little mother, and a lovely child;" and listen — these three

or four hummed notes -- that tenor whistle ! Those sound so familiar.

They rose and walked on together. As they passed the door, Chris caught a few words. The voice was different, and the words were not much ; only an old Spanish proverb she had heard a thousand times : "'Tis not the frock which makes the friar." Sonsie, whose arm was around her waist, felt the thrill which passed over her darling's slender figure. She saw her raise her head like a startled deer, and noticed the paleness and the shade together, "as if lilies had been mixed with violets," which swept her cheek ; and she tightened her clasp, and whispered some soft words, with her deepening eyes seeking the depths of the great wistful brown ones, which prayed for help.

The talkers passed on through the length of the long breakfast-parlor ; and out at the door, into the hall, and mounted the wide staircase. And Chris lost the sound of their foot-falls on the thick carpet ; and our party ascended in the elevator to their apartments, after agreeing upon the breakfast hour ; and Sonsie took Chris, who walked in a waking dream, to her room, and placed her in the great chair.

"I'll be back in a trice, Miss Chris," said she ; "lay yer pretty head back and shut the poor tired eyes I love to see bright, till I'm here again."

She flew down the stairs to the office, and walked straight up to the desk. She had time to count all the bells, and spell the names of the trunks standing in piles, and examine the faces passing to and fro, before the busy clerk was ready to attend her, and then she read all the recent entries in the travelers' book, and started back.

"Where's these to go, Mr. Brooks ?" asked a porter.

"Fourth floor, Tom, No. 80, -- That jolly old party with a beard like Methuselah, and the sick man next."

Sonsie, listening, got no information, and returned to Chris, who looked expectantly in her eyes as she appeared.

"It was like a vision, wasn't it, mavourneen, but 'tis not real, and — small loss anyhow" (this to herself) — "please try and forget it, and bring the sweetness back to yer darlin' face; and come, acoushla, I'll undress my lady, and then I'll read her something nice till she falls asleep."

Sonsie talked on, while she took care of her lady, who was thankful to let herself be attended, and cuddled, and who folded her hands beneath her cheek, and shut her eyes, and the girl took up an open volume she found upon the table, and read aloud, —

"Nay, none but children
Could gather butter-cups and may-weed;
But violets! dear violets, methinks
I could live forever on a bank of violets,
Or die most happy there."

She put the book hurriedly from her, and Chris hoped that the half-gloom would hide the tears which would filter through her closed lids.

"It is very very late, good Sonsie," said she presently; "you must get to bed. I am going to sleep, so wish me pleasant dreams."

Sonsie took the hand reached out to her, and dropped upon her knees beside the bed.

"I want to say me prayers here, wid me white angel forninst me, after I have read a fistful of good words from the book that has always some comfort for sick souls." She drew Mary Ann's little gift from her pocket, a dainty volume in golden clasps; and sought some of those dear inspirations, which are full of pith and sweetness. "Ah, here it is, mavourneen," said she, "just as if it were a purpose for you: 'Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart, for

God accepteth thy works.' Isent that a good bit of readin', now?"

"Yes, Sonsie," answered Chris, quietly; 'but the summing up of the subject is left out of your quotation. If it were all there, you'd find the rest of it read, 'Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher, all is vanity.'"

"Miss Chris," said Sonsie, much troubled, "is there not comfort in the Bible for all, and help for all, and strength for all?"

"Yes, indeed," answered Chris, very sorry for having spoken out the desolation she felt. "Oh, yes, Sonsie, and it is only me who am disturbed to-night, and not in a fit frame to receive the precious consolations. I am going to try to be, though, before I sleep; therefore come now, and let us say our prayers together, before you go."

"Yes, mavourneen, those which we learned in our childhood."

"Far off childhood!" said Chris, sorrowfully.



CHAPTER XXIII.

SONSIE AND JAN SAY THEIR PRAYERS.



THE next morning the party came strolling into the St. James tea-room; by twos and threes, and were placed by the bland waiter at the tables fronting the window of the middle saloon, so airy and light; and of course they all read Wheeler & Wilson's sign opposite to them, and all discussed sewing-machines, before they plunged into the plans of the day.

"Why not go to Stewart's at once?" asked Sabrina, "where they keep every thing."

"Because," replied Mrs. Walsingham, "they have such an unpleasant, indifferent, supercilious set of attendants there. I went, last year, to buy a large bill, while I was ordering Pussy Ashcroft's trousseau (our little Texas friend, you know), and I asked for the first thing on my list — a lace cape. Two clerks were conversing together, and I spoke twice before they even looked at me. Then one *did* turn, and stare up and down my gray travelling-dress, and coolly inform me, "they had none likely to suit *me*; none under fifty dollars!" and the fellow presented his shoulder and the two brass buttons in his back, and resumed the account of a street brawl, which I had daringly interrupted. Quite quenched, I retreated to the glove-counter, and took modestly a pair *des gants*, which I got tossed down before me after a couple of entreaties, and I tried the leather, and examined the number and maker's name."

"*Don't* stretch those gloves that way, ma'am, *if* you please!" expostulated the clerk, in a tone of the deepest injury.

"Absolutely extinguished, I dropped the hand-shoes and with drew, thankful to get off with my head on my shoulders, and I cut loose from Stewart's forever; and I know that mine is not a solitary case. Yes! I know it quite well. A lady who goes in that store in a plain dress has no chance at all, unless she is willing to be snubbed, and takes joyfully contemptuous looks and supercilious service, which I'm quite willing to admit I do not. If I am about to spend money, I like to leave it with agreeable, cheerful people, who are not too fine to attend to their duties, and who will not glower at my clothes, and toss their goods about as if the sight of me was hateful, and my simple inquiries a personal affront."

"Ah!" said Jan, reaching over to pat his mother's little jewelled hand, — "ah!" there speaks the country importance. Our ladies of position, who are accustomed to have their say and their way at home, would not make very complaisant atoms of a city mass."

"That's where your head is level," replied Peter. "There's Zoe! It's all my farm is worth to walk the streets with her. She sputters and scolds, *at me*, if people jostle her, just as if nobody had a right to push along, when she chooses to loiter. I expect every day I'll have to call out some fellow who has stuck his foot through her skirt. I assure you, I will like a plucked lettuce under her blaze of indignation, if I but happen —"

"Well, I don't care a bit," pouted Zoe. "It is so grotesquely ridiculous to be jerked backward, when one is sailing along with satisfied face. Job's wife couldn't bear it, and look good-tempered!"

Chris was arrived; and John Peebles, who had been walking up and down the office, with a book in his fingers, inspecting each cargo of humanity dumped by the industrious elevator, joined her at the door, hoping for a nice chat; but she was too perturbed in spirit to afford him any satisfaction, and she scanned drearily the faces of the comers and goers, and the words of a song she had paused to hear, by the half-open door of the great-drawing room, lingered in her ears. She could not see the singer, but the tones were rich and true, —

"There wandered a lady upon the strand,
Her fair hair bound with a golden band;
Sing hey, sing ho, for that land of flowers.

Hail to thee! hail to thee! lady bright,
Mine own shalt thou be e'er morning light;
Sing hey, sing ho, for that land of flowers."

When John Peebles asked her why she did not eat the pigeon he ordered for her breakfast, she roused with some effort from her reverie and answered him, —

“But low was he laid in a grassy grave !”

and the mystified young scholar stared with “eyes glaring wildly,” like Sintram’s, while the vibrations of the harp-strings still resounded.

Sabrina, whose breakfasts were always of the simplest, came around, wrapped in her fleecy violet shawl, and placed her little flower-vase at Chris’s elbow.

“I picked them out of Zoe’s breakfast-posey. She doesn’t care at all for heliotropes ; and do you know, dearest, the lady-kin declares she’ll buy an evening dress the color of that cactus-blossom at her throat. I may not gainsay her, for Zoe would scarcely be Zoe without a trail of scarlet upon her hair, or a vivid robe, like the pomegranate which the flower-fairy transformed into a woman. Will you come to Vanity Fair, sweet, and help us buy pretties in the great bazaars ?”

“I think — not,” Chris hesitatingly replied. “I have promised to stay within doors this morning, and at two o’clock I am to explore the dens of the lions, with Mr. Peebles as Daniel, to carry the green umbrella, you know.”

As Sabrina did not know that Dr. Max was to come to the St. James at eleven, she could not understand the flickering blood in her friend’s cheek, nor the unrestful, expectant mood which glimmered all over her.

Jan had got hold of Sonsie Eagan hours ago. They were both early risers, and he came across her, in hat and mantle, walking swiftly through the upper hall.

“Whither away so fast, Sonsie ?”

“I’m going to church, sir,” she answered, striding on

"Let me go too. I want to pray a little."

It seemed, though, that he wished more to arrange his day to suit his plans than to offer many petitions. He hoped to get Sonsie's company in the park, or at Greenwood, or some other quiet place; but the young girl had views of her own, and his wishes went for nothing. But after a moment's thought she opened wide her Irish eyes, and said impulsively, —

"I wish you'd throw away these notions, sir, and come along with me. *I'll* take you where you'll get good."

"Very well, Sonsie. You know I am willing to follow your leading — in that direction, I mean; and I'll promise to trot by your side all day, like your faithful frisky Flirt, or Rainbow, the Egyptian, if you will engage me your evening, and we'll go down to Wallack's and see a play, with the glorious Lester himself for 'hero.'"

"And is it a the-ā-tre, sir?"

"Yes, Sonsie, a choice good one. Splendid acting, gorgeous dresses, perfect scenery, and real standard plays. I know for sure that you will like it, and I appetite beforehand the pleasure I shall enjoy in watching you. I hate to take stiff, wooden girls, who can't cry or laugh; but you, Sonsie! I'm certain you will enter into the counterfeited semblance, and count it real."

"But, whisper, Mr. Vedder — could ye take me to see an Irish play, somewheres?"

"Oh yes," replied Jan readily, "there's Arrah na Pogue on at the Olympic. We'll go there. I declare, Sonsie, I wish everybody knew what they want and why they want it as thoroughly as you do. You are *such* a relief, positively a refreshment, after the namby-pamby things, who think they admire — yes, they're almost sure they do — but don't know either — perhaps — really — becalmed, befogged in uncertainty. You Milesians

get twice the odor and flavor out of life that the cold, thin-blooded Yankees do. I think your life-current flows faster through your veins. There ! look, now, at that pretty purple wanderer ; it seems I see it dancing along that thread at your wrist, Sonsie."

"Do you, indeed, sir ?" replied Sonsie, smiling brightly, but with her head up, and a hasty thrust of her two hands behind her. "Sure there's no call for *you* to be trying me pulse, then ! please keep your fingers to home. I've no fever ; an' if I had, you're not the docther."

Her round, firm arms were a temptation to Jan, clear and blush-tinted like a young rose-leaf ; but he did not touch them, though she quietly brought them back again, and stood fearless and modest right before him, looking in his face with one of her merry *sonrisa*, which sent dimples rippling all round her red lips, and danced in her blue eye's mischief.

"It was the most praiseworthy thing you ever did, to be an Irish lassie, Sonsie," said he, enjoyingly. There is no people on the face of the globe who have so many agreeable traits. In fact, they are inexhaustible — ever fresh and ever new."

"Ah ! Mr. Vedder, sir, you are a jewel to say that. The praises of me people in yer mouth is sweeter than the song of the wood-quest," said Sonsie. "I hope ye speak yer true thoughts."

"Indeed I do. Ireland is the land of the bards. The national airs are full of poesy and religion. They are the echoes of a soul soft and plaintive. Their love-songs are redolent of the truth and fervor of the women, and the bravery and light-hearted, frolicsome temperament of the men ; and their power of adoring is unequalled !"

"Where did you read them purty words, sir ?"

"How do you know I read them anywhere ; cunning Ollam Folda ?"

Sure, sir, can't I tell by the light tripping of the words when ye's reciting out of a book, from when yer talking yer own nonsense out of yer head ?"

"Well !" said Jan, tossing on his soft hat, "we'll see Arrah na Pogue to-night, and I shall hear the saucy things you say ; that will be my pleasure."

"Thank you, Mr. Vedder," Sonsie replied, smiling. "I'm glad you think so well of me pert ways, because a 'cauld word is as bad as a stab to an Irish heart ;' and when ye've come until the theatre, I'll be sure to be livened up wid the life of it, but I'll begin me day wid a handful of prayers. Look, Mr. Jan !" — Sonsie paused before the pretty church by the St. James, — "look, sir, 'tis a fine quiet place ; let us say our prayers here together : our dear Christ is the same ; the Irish and the Dutch can kneel side by side before yon altar and seek the like blessing. Whisper, sir," she added. Jan looked at her eyes, deepening into violet. "I think this might be the place where the little crossing-sweeper found her mother. See !

" 'Tis the wide-open doors of a church,
And she softly crept into the deep sheltered porch ;

and oh, Mr. Vedder ! it makes my heart beat. There now !

"She heard the solemn organ, and the voices of the choir."

Mark ! how sweet that music sounds ! When I came in hither by mesel in the gloaming yestereen, I was creeping all over and chilly. I seemed to see the poor child lying down there in yon corner. Ah, let us hasten, sir ; my heart aches wid her sorrow !"

They walked a couple of miles, and looked into a score or so of shop-windows, and were very merry, when they came into the tea-room and joined their party.

CHAPTER XXIV.

CHRIS'S DAY AMONG THE LIONS.



AND so they all went 'out, and left our Chris dreaming over the voice and the song ; and she sat down to the piano in the great drawing-room and played out her dream, and the strain rose insensibly into the melody she had heard, and the words thrilled through her lips with the keen enjoyment one has in recalling pleasant harmonies, and she sang, —

“ Sing hey ! sing ho, for that land of flowers,”

running down onto C sharp, and smiled to herself at the faithful copy she was rendering of the unknown basso ; and lo ! she heard a brisk clapping of hands, and “ Bravo ! bravissimo ! Mees Goldschmidt,” and rose hastily to find Dr. Max at her elbow.

“ You also sing of Sintram's songs, and you also ‘ seek the bowers where the roses blow.’ ”

“ Oh, Dr. Max ! you were the singer then, to whom I listened this morning ; I should not have feared to come in here, if I had known that.”

Yes, Fraulein *Creestabel*, I was too impatient ; I arrived too early to find you, and now I must hasten, indeed I can scarcely stop to sit : I hope you will come out with me immediately ; I have some commission on my hands — a bequest to dispose of, and I beg your assistance and coöperation.”

Dr. Max paused at Ball & Black's, and said, “ Let us enter here, Mees Goldschmidt, and look at the jewels.”

He walked down to a side-counter, and asked a question of the clerk, who brought out a box which he laid open upon the

desk, -- a bracelet of twelve sapphires, in massive setting of old yellow gold, hinged upon diamonds. The Doctor examined them critically within, and frowned, bringing his yellow eyebrows together over his leonine eyes, which always clouded like the smoke topaz, when he was angry, or fired by emotion.

"You have failed to obey my directions," said he; "I ordered German text, and you have put it in Old English!"

"You told me Old English," replied the clerk, crossly; "tisn't my fault if you don't know your own mind two days together. I did it exactly to your order, which I took down on a piece of paper and gave to the engraver!"

"You mistake, friend," said Max, "or you mis-state: produce your bit of paper to your confusion."

"I can't hunt it up now. I know it is right, and you may take it or leave it: those are the proper letters for it, anyhow."

"Have the goodness to mind your own business, and leave offering opinions upon my affairs till you're asked. Show me some plain gold rings." He turned and walked back to Chris, who was watching him with the fascination her association of ideas gave him in her mind, and with Sintram's song floating about her, — Sintram the yellow-haired, composed and stately.

"Could das fraulein lend me ihr *klein finger* as a sample. I must make a purchase," said he, reaching after what he desired, with business air. She extended her hand readily, in its rosy-gray glove, and he fitted it with a slender circlet of enamel and gold, which he pronounced "vara goot," and put away into his vest pocket, after paying the glowering clerk.

Now Mees Goldschmidt, I know you are an enthusiast for art. I remember quite well that I found you and Herr Groenveldt adoring a saint in his studio, and because you wore a much-daubed apron; I know you also make yourself the pic-

tures. What if we were to go and look at some Flemish ones Goupil has to show."

They passed a blind man on the pave grinding the most dolorous of organs, and Dr. Max dropped a bill into his hat, and he excused his charitable impulse, and ridiculed it by reciting Canning's "Knife-Grinder," and then they were within the gas lighted room alone together. After a survey of the white stout-footed roadsters and the rough cart-horses and the sorrel colt, and a certain amount of talk upon the picture and the odd life the painter had elected to herself, they sat down on a bench, and Dr. Max took out the casket and laid it open on his knee.

"There is a story to that jewel, Mees Goldschmidt," said he, pointing his finger at it. "I'd like to tell it you. You see the setting is *vara* old; and the sapphires are the color of the sky when the moon is full. My father, whom I never saw" (a shadow and a kindling light flitted through his smoke-topaz eyes), — "it may be that it will be for me to speak openly to you of that some day. My father gave them to my mother; he brought them from beyond the seas; there were ear-rings and brooch to match; those my mother commissioned me to give to my friend Otho, with her love. He was like a son to her; so dear, that I got jealous sometimes. She said they were for his wife, and I put them into his hand just before we reached Rosenbloom that Christmas time, when I was so blessed as to dance with Mees Goldschmidt at the great party. I remember quite well how he looked when he took them, — prouder than I ever saw him, exulting, arrogant almost. He seized them, like a lawful spoil of his bow and spear, and hid them away in his breast. I remember also wondering if he was in love. Close friends as we are, though, I dared not ask the question. I found afterwards that Otho the Doctor was wedded to his dry

ones, therefore let him alone. He's a glorious old fellow ; but somehow he fails to see the beauty of God's fairest work, so I suppose my mother's gems must rest, shorn of their beams, in dull darkness."

Chris stooped to pick up the tin view-horn which had rolled off her lap, and she steadied her face and resumed her listening attitude, with her eyes upon the carpet, and her small teeth compressing her bloodless lips.

"My mother" (he spoke very lovingly the words ; she noticed that, even through her agitation), — "my mother bestowed this upon me also then. 'Take it, Max,' said she. 'I was a happy girl when I first put it on, and I should like you to give it to a good, true, pure maiden, and tell her your mother bid you do it.' 'I believe prayers are answered, and I have prayed that the good God will point out the right one. I am sure it will fit *your* wrist ; so sure, and so hopeful that you will permit me to carry out my mother's wishes, that I have ventured to have your name engraved beneath hers."

Chris suffered him to lift the hand, which he touched courteously, and fasten the clasp upon her arm, hardly knowing what she did. The mention of Otho, his possession of the match jewels, which were for his wife, her happiness, her misery, her conflict, and her loveless future, overwhelmed her, and she sank back pale, breathless. Dr. Max again read her emotions to suit himself, and read them wrong.

"Now, Mees Goldschmidt, let me finish my story." He smiled ; and with his eyes dropped upon the empty casket, of which he kept playing the lock with busy fingers, "My mother bid me also marry my love if I could get her to wear the bracelet. I'm sure you like obedient boys, do you not ? I wish with all my heart to obey my good mother. Won't you have the little ring ? it precisely fits your finger, you know."

He was deeply earnest, beneath his whimsical wooing, and his heart throbbed with strong love-power; but Chris did not see it; did not think about him, There was no room in her soul for a new love.

"Take off the bracelet, Dr. Max," said she, passionately pushing it with her slender fingers; "it hurts me! I cannot wear it indeed! I was dreaming while you put it on; do not speak to me of love. You cannot know how impossible it is for me to care for you!"

Dr. Max studied eagerly her tumultuous eyes with their swift thoughts, and noted the startled wild-deer glance, seeking escape; and his face saddened a little.

"Ah, it is too sudden! You think me presumptuous; you consider me a stranger. I had forgotten you did not know how long your image has been mine. I could tell you every word you uttered that evening; I can recall every light, airy, graceful motion, every smile on your swiftly-changing face: but you did not know that; I was but the acquaintance of an evening. Mees Goldschmidt, let me wait a little; only wear my mother's bracelet, and let me hope."

He kissed the ring, and returned it to his pocket. "I shall not forget whose little finger *you* have clasped," said he.

"Dr. Max," began Chris, "I haven't any love to give you; I cannot wear this! I am not the maiden your mother bade you seek! Oh, no. I am very unhappy! Why couldn't you be my friend?" she added, half angrily. "I want good, honest friends so much: I don't want lovers! I've got my life marked out; I've given my soul to art, and music, and charity. I could have enjoyed your friendship so much; but love you! marry you! Oh, no! Never!

Determined not to break down, and give the tears way,

which were brimming her eyes, she continued with a half smile.

“‘Nay, seek another bride, I pray :

Most fair are the maidens of Naples Bay.’

‘Tis your own song, you know, Dr. Max. I see that you think me trifling, and wanting in heart. I am not ; only it is of no use, sir : please forget that you ever uttered the words, and be my friend. Cannot true women have true men for friends, without marrying them ?”

She held out her hand, and looked in his face with searching, wistful eyes.

“Yes, truly I believe so, indeed, Mees Goldschmidt. I see I was mistaken : I see it so plainly, that I will not pain you any more,” he replied sorrowfully ; “but you are, after all, the ‘good pure maiden,’ and you shall not refuse to wear my mother’s gift ; that would hurt me too much : and let me believe that you sometimes think about the clumsy fellow who did not know how to woo you.”

He kissed the hand he held, and they passed out into the street together. He left her in the great drawing-room of the St. James, with parting words so kind, and tender, and hearty, that when he walked away, Chris felt that she had cut loose from a friendly soul, who might have sheltered hers — and was drifting alone. Peebles found her on the sofa, with clasped hands, and suffering, colorless face, when he came to take her into the dens of the lions. She scarcely knew where she was when she entered Besom street, and saw on a great white sign-board the name, in black letters, of the firm she sought : “Slightem & Slash.” She got her ideas together, and grasped firmly her little roll of manuscript.

“You stop out here, good, Mr. Peebles, please,” said she, wetting her lips nervously. “I’d rather face my fate without

witnesses;" and leaving her escort in the outer room, she pushed open the green-baize door, to which the clerk with a pen behind each ear marshalled her; and she stood in the presence of the great Mr. Slightem, and extended her hand and her letter.

"Oh!" he exclaimed, running his eyes down the page, and then over his visitor. "Good day, miss. I am very busy, but I shall try to give you a few moments." He motioned Chris to an old horse-hair chair, which had seen better days, and sat down in front of her,—as if she was a dreadful bore,—and shuffled his papers, and his eyes said plainly that he wished she would take herself off.

"I regret to interrupt you, sir; but I don't see how I can well help it, and I will be as brief as I can. I wish to consult you about bringing out my book, or rather, to get some information as to how authors go to work to publish."

"A novel?"

"Yes, sir."

"We don't publish any novels, miss; we only take translations from the German, and scientific works; and we have such a surfeit of those, that we keep circulars of refusal ready, to fill out for applicants."

"Perhaps you will be kind enough to recommend me to some other publisher, who does publish novels."

"I could name some to you, but I couldn't request them to publish your book; and if I did, they'd ask me if I saw any thing green in them. Mr. Slightem applied a finger to his eye, with a gesture rude boys are fond of using. If you will take my advice, you will put up your manuscript, and go home: not one in a hundred of the books published ever pay."

"I know a good many must pay, sir; because we are a ra-

tion of readers, and new books are all the time being issued; and, if it were a losing business, publishers would soon abandon it."

Mr. Slightem laughed sardonically.

"You think *your* book will be the exception to the rule, of course. They all think that."

"I do believe it will sell, sir," replied Chris, firmly. "I have had it carefully read by good critics, just such as read other books, and their judgment is so favorable that I am determined to get it out."

Another laugh.

"Partial friends! of course *they* praise. It is really odd how anxious everybody is to get a little fame."

"I think I can command some good fair notices from the Press."

"That does not make any difference."

"I have some friends, who will help to push the book."

"That won't amount to any thing."

"Pray, sir, what does sell books?" asked Chris, flashing up.

"I don't know — they sell themselves; but this is certain — nearly all publishers have determined not to take up any new authors."

"How are new authors to get introduced to the public, Mr. Slightem?"

"I can't tell, I'm sure. One thing is certain, — booksellers have got to live."

"Will you read my story?"

"I'd as soon take a dose of medicine as read a novel! not myself, of course. If you still insist, I'll have it read. If I should peruse all the manuscripts which are thrust upon me, I should not have time to eat my dinner. If you had come

unrecommended, I would not have bothered with you ; but to oblige my old friend Noble, I'll have your manuscript examined ; but I can't give you the least encouragement."

"Very well, sir," said Chris, rising ; "I'll not keep you any longer from your dinner, nor will I trouble you with my story. Perhaps I ought to say, I thank you for your politeness."

She walked away too angry to be disheartened. Mr. Slightem took up his work before her back was turned, and left her to find her way out by herself.

"We must look further, good Daniel ; so shoulder your faithful green umbrella, and lead the way. He glowers and sighs, and I can guess the cause, but who's obliged to spell *his* 'hums and haws?'" said she, as she turned the corner of Besom Street.

When they entered the store of Mr. G. Hazel Fortune, on Broadway, she was rather red in the face ; a trifle tremulous in the pulse, but prepared for any disagreeable line of conduct the Hazel Fortunes might display towards her, in her defenceless character of "new author."

The young proprietor was talking with a customer, but turned instantly when his clerk approached him, and said in a low, respectful voice, "A lady to speak with you, sir ;" and advanced with a friendly smile on his clear-cut sagacious face, and invited her to be seated on his own sofa, and sat down himself beside her, as if he had thousands of years at his command, and she was welcome to any number of them. He heard all she had to say, and helped her out with pertinent suggestions and remarks, showed her some contracts, and explained the *modus operandi* clearly and fully, and looked at her through his glasses while he talked, turning over the manuscript in his slender white hands, and smiling at her eagerness ; and even though she was intent upon her business, she observed

that his eyes were large, and clear, and hazel, and that his mouth was pleasant and cordial, his mustache silky brown, and his clothes handsome, and easy-fitting.

"It is your first book, I perceive," said he ; "I hope truly that you will be successful. I will certainly do all in my power for you : the manuscript shall be read and pronounced upon in a day or two. I sometimes dabble in ink a little myself ; and I understand your fondness for your dream pet."

Mr. Fortune rose when Chris rose, and walked by her side to the door, talking easily ; and the last she saw of his agreeable face was a friendly smile, as she returned his parting bow ; and leaving his presence, she felt a glow of gratitude for the manner in which he had conducted the interview, his absolute politeness, his appearance of attentive interest, and the ultimate success of her project became for the time a secondary consideration.

Suffice it to say, that Mr. Hazel Fortune did all he promised, and more ; and Chris was made happy by a letter from him before the close of the third day, saying that her manuscript was accepted ; and it was brought out in due time by "the Royal George" (as Chris always called him afterward), in splendid style ; real illustrations, not sketches of a woman in flounces— all coarse hard lines, nor two men and a table, nor a chair and a grand piano, which might do duty for an almanac or a fashion-book with equal facility, but real pictures ! which meant something, and enriched and beautified the story ; and *such* letter-press ; on *such* tinted paper, ah ! the very sight and touch of it were positive pleasures.

CHAPTER XXV.

SONSIE'S DAY, AND A LETTER FROM CAPTAIN SLOCUM.

JAN and she took a stage to the old Museum, and then they walked through street after street, narrow and narrower, till they came to an alley, so choked with old tottering houses, old iron, old rags, old bones, old withered women, and old, skinny, half-naked children, that Jan stood still.

"Sonsie, you shall go no further into this horrible den," said he.

She laughed.

"Ah! whist, Mr. Vedder, take it aisy — I used to live here in this very house; and, by the same token, this is the very old rickety staircase that Denny and me pattered up o'nights after me sweeping the dirty crosses the livelong day. It bore us poor weary children those times, and as it did not tumble down yet (small loss though if it did), I suppose 'twill bear the pair of us this day. Coom now, Mr. Vedder, and let a gentleman see the first home the Eagans found in America."

The way was so dark as they mounted that she seized his hand and led him on through narrow, dirty passages, reeking with vile smells, slippery with filth.

"I usen't to have my place like this one; I scrubbed and cleaned, and me poor mother, she had a laugh those days like the merry tinkle of a water-brook. We'd just coomed then, and the joy and hope were not starved out of her; but 'tis thrue for you, sir — we niver think so much of God's sunshine as in the moonless night-storms, and I didn't know the vally of me

mother's smile till 'twas quenched in tears ; and it came all too soon too ; for me father could find no work, and he was a handsome, easy man, and the labor was hard on his careless heart anyhow, and we are all too proud to beg ; and they two died every day to see the children peakin' and starvin'. I was a wee girleen, and Dennie only a clip of a boy, but we remember all those times, and often prate over them together. Dennie's a good lad, Mr. Vedder. Ah, wisha ! but these steps is the treacherous villains. I wonder who is in the old place now !"

She knocked smartly with her firm fist on the farthest door, and a woman opened it a couple of inches and stuck one eye out. It wasn't much of herself she let be seen ; but what did show looked so sly and wicked, and she was so unwilling to let them in, answering their questions in a fat, wheezy growl, that Jan tried to pull Sonsie away, but she persisted.

"I used to live here, good wife," said she ; "and I'll just look in for the sake of the old times." She set her firm shoulder against the door, and, with a quick push, she shoved off the guardian angel and entered the room.

The wretched child the woman held was hollow-eyed, and half-asleep ; two others lay in an old wooden cradle with their eyes shut ; still another in the corner on the bare floor ; a fifth was tied by the hands to an iron bar, which stretched across, between the tottering walls, and a raw-hide lay on the floor suggestively near him. The woman was greasy and flabby ; and there was bread and meat in the cupboard, and a whiskey-jug on the shelf, and bits of cheese scattered on the rickety table ; but starvation was written all over the skeletons who opened human eyes and stared at them. And a feeble cry in the corner caught Sonsie's attention. She thought at first it was a cat, but a stir among the rubbish impelled her to hurry and lift a rag

from the heap, and a little mite of a purple baby ! A day old, perhaps, and only life enough in its tiny heart to suffer.

"Augh ! but this is the divel's den in me old place," said Sonsie, whose eyes grew deep, and whose face blanched to clear marble. "Mr. Jan !" she began in a high key. Jan turned suddenly and gave her a look ; she stopped instantly. There had been such unwillingness in the female to permit any looking about, that his curiosity was roused and he put his head through an inner door. It was a terrible sight ! a dead woman lay on a dirty bed, and a poor crippled boy crouched in a heap as far off as he could get, but gazing with scared eyes upon the still figure, so full of terror for his childish breast ; and so wretched, scared, and hopeless was he in his filth and rags, that Jan turned sick at the sight of him ; and the shrinking terror he showed at the opening of the door was painfully hinting, and Jan read a life in it which filled him with indignation.

"You have a large family," said he, turning quietly to the woman, who stealthily watched him.

"Yes, sir, a large one indeed, sir," she whined. "I'm in great trouble ! my poor children here are down with the fever, and the little dear, in yonder, I took in off the streets last night, and she died on me not an hour ago ; and I've nobody to fetch any help, and I don't know what I'm to do, I'm sure. I'm as poor as a cat, and any little help you can give me, I'd bless you for."

"You drop your babies about rather promiscuously, don't you?" asked Jan, pointing to the mite Sonsie had picked up, and was holding in her arms, while she faced the woman with eyes and manner full of fire and passion — no trace of fear anywhere. Jan did not wait to make up his mind ; he felt sure they had got within one of the dens where helpless children are left to be slowly got rid of. And he looked at Sonsie and decided upon his course of action at once. The woman also scanned

her fresh face and full figure, rubbing her cheek with the corner of her apron, and there was murder in her hateful eyes — the death that cometh up out of the pit.

"I'll see that you are cared for," said he. "Come, Sonsie; you've looked over the place and its inhabitants; let us go!"

"I'll take this poor bit along with me, sir, I think."

Before he had time to answer, the cripple had crawled to his feet, braving the woman, who glared and shook her fist at him, and reached stealthily behind her for a whip on the wall.

"Do not leave us, good gentleman! do not; she kills us all the time. Oh! open the door and take us out with you; she's not our mother; we are not brothers and sisters. Oh, pity us, we have suffered so much: look at my face — these scars, these blows."

"Get out, you ungrateful wretch! shut your mouth; do you know what that is?"

The child glanced at the whip with despair in his eyes.

"I can no more than die; and if you refuse to help me, and yon girl with the brave face. Ah, you *can* be sorry; for your eyes weep. *Don't* let her strike — oh!"

It was too late; for a heavy blow from the raw-hide felled him to the ground, and Jan flew upon the greasy wretch and twisted the weapon from her hand.

"Are you afraid, Sonsie?" asked he.

"No, sir; there's been beating and starving enough here: I'll not leave the place till we carry these poor babes along with us!"

Jan threw up the window and shouted "police," and Sonsie set her back against the door, through which the woman tried to escape.

"Bide where ye are, till ye get lave!" said she, looking her in the eye. "I'm not afraid of yer fist, no, nor your broom

neither," seeing her looking around for an instrument of offence. "Yer time is up ! there they come ; the stairs are full of them."

She had no friends even among the poor and wicked about her, and the mob rushed on, and directly a couple of blue-coats were hustled into the scene ; and, as Sonsie said, her time was up.

The cripple's story was clear. He had been there ever and ever so long ; the others came after him ; they were drugged and starved and beaten. She often told them they'd got to die, and Jan and the blue-coats had hard work to keep the mob off the wretch, who cursed, and gnawed her hands in her impotent fury ; and they dragged her howling away, and Jan and Sonsie brought the seven children in a carriage to Mr. Van Meter, in the New Bowery, and they told the story, and waited till they saw them bathed and dressed and made comfortable ; and Sonsie said many sweet words to the little cripple (who kissed her hands and her garments), and promised to come on the morrow and see him ; and she went to the good matron, and begged her to take care of the "purty babby," and Jan slipped a cheque for five hundred dollars into the hand of the hard-working missionary ; and after hearing the "friendless" sing, they hasted away.

"Where shall we go now, Sonsie," asked Jan, when they had emerged upon Broadway, and paused for a good breath.

"Let us go home, sir, — I want to think a bit."

She hardly spoke to him all the way, though she fixed her eyes upon him often, and when they reached the St. James she followed him silently into the great drawing-room ; then she took his hand and kissed it.

"Oh, how good it is to see you those times ! The manhood sits so grand and beautiful in your two eyes !" And breaking down utterly, she walked sobbing away, and locked herself into

her room. Half an hour later, she returned briskly, her countenance clear and joyous, looking into the great drawing-room.

"Ah, Mr. Vedder, sir! I hardly thought I'd find you here, and I am glad you stopped a bit."

"Yes, Sonsie," said Jan, pushing off his cap, and pulling out his watch. "You've been gone — bless my soul! I'd no idea it was so late! almost dinner-time!"

"I've come back to spake a little of me mind to you, sir," said Sonsie, sitting down. "I've been thinking I should like to tell Mrs. Slocum about our day. She talked often of adopting some poor baby, and maybe her heart'd lead her to pick up yon little bit; sure, she'd a bonnie face in her clean frock."

"Is that so? Well, come! we'll have up some paper and things, and indite an epistle here. It should be an enjoyable affair to write to your dictation, Sonsie."

Jan stepped up by Sonsie's side, in front of the great mirror, and took off his cap, which he had been rather uncivilly wearing up to this period. "The Irish and the Dutch," said he mischievously; "pretty good samples, ain't we?"

"Yer extremely well contrived, Mr. Vedder, sir; and to my eye, ye nivir looked so well as ye do at th's moment, for a decent, clean-skinned gentleman; and sure 'tis a brave beginning that yer making intirely; and here comes the writin' things. Now sit down, please, and tell them all about those children."

Sonsie was well pleased with their joint production, and praised highly Jan's eloquent descriptions. In due time there came a reply, which it is perhaps as well to give while we are on the subject.

"DEAR JAN, — We got your letter this morning. I'd just like to tie that woman to a wild mustang colt, and set h'm loose.

Why didn't you let the rabble chop her all to bits. Dulcet says my bark is a good deal worse than my bite. Well, never mind; let us drop her. We know the brimstone is a-biling. We've been holding matrimonial councils, off and on, all day most, tyin' to make up our mind just what we *do* want. Dulcet's eyes are as red as a rooster's coom, and her nose — well, I won't say what I was going to, because she's comin'. But the upshot of the whole is this: Dulcet wants the baby. I kinder hanker after that pair of boys to make farmers out of. Dulcet, she says, the two girls would be a nice investment; and then we calculated how that would leave the other girl all alone; they'd been companions in misery, and it seemed almost a pity to leave her out in the cold; and that poor cripple that pleaded for their lives so pretty — little helpless, sufferin' critter! Them children allers does hev just such faces as you said,—patient and mild, and Jerusalem crickets. We'll have the batch, and hang the expense! I haven't got a relation in the world I care a barn-cat for, except Dolphy's folks, and they're a darned sight richer than I am. My wife, she's set her heart on fillin' up our house with them God-forsaken young ones, and I like her for it. Seven is a good number. There was seven golden candlesticks, seven rams, seven lambs, seven he-goats, seven bullocks in the sacrifice; and it says the whole assembly took counsel to keep seven days, and they kept them with gladness. And Dulcet keeps saying a piece of poetry about the churchyard, and one that was gone away somewheres, and two was dead; and the little maid sticks to it that there was seven of 'em yet. Yes, Jan, I want you to go right round to Van Meter, and tell him to express on the lot. I'll go the whole hog. My Jemimy! Dulcet, she's smart and spry, and I glory in her spunk; and I am quite impatient to hear them call us papy and mammy.'

Jan laid the affair before the party at dinner, and the two mammas nimbly agreed to furnish suitable clothing for the little strangers, as their share in the pleasure. (I suppose the tears they shed over Sonsie's heartbreaking relation didn't count.) And Lord & Taylor sold seven complete wardrobes, a dozen of everything, as theirs. And extremely well-behaved and obliging was the gentlemanly clerk, while he assisted at the selection. And Sabrina brought corals, Zoe, knives and forks, Chris, picture-books, and Sonsie was beginning to feel her poverty oppressive when Jan took her to a toy-store, and bade her select for him ; and she bought an estate, elegant mansion, barn-yards, stables, orchards, stock, and inhabitants. And Jan admired the white chip Lombardys, and said, "Are those *our* poplar trees that rear?" And in less than a week after Sonsie's day, the seven innocents were safely housed in Dulcet's home. The Celtic lassie was jubilant. She sang in spirit, and exulted to Chris over the good commencement Mr. Vedder was making.

"Yes, Sonsie, it was cleverly and nobly done. Jan carries a power for any thing he means to accomplish. He will not miss getting his will in most of his desires. He is of the kind people call 'successful men.' And, by the way, I have a treasure to show you. I've been to-day in the rarest place ! a wilderness of books ! Mr. Peebles took me into Nassau Street, and there is a store down there where the volumes heap the counters and shelves, and pile the floor. I had such a good time ! There was an illustrated *Pilgrim's Progress* and a *Don Quixote*—you never saw such beauties ! I only fetched away this,"—(carefully dusting an odd volume of *Walpole's Painters*)—"and listen, Sonsie. You must know that Henry VIII., whom your *true* church calls a Protestant reformer, and we heretics know to have been a cruel, sensual, hard-hearted murderer, had a sister, whom he married to his friend Charles Bran-

don ; and this is the motto which the bridegroom chose to adopt along with his princess bride :

“ ‘Cloth of gold, do not despise, though thou be matched with cloth of frieze ;
Cloth of frieze, be not too bold, though thou be matched with cloth of gold ’ ”

Sonsie sat with downcast mien for a long time after Chris shut the book, and when she went away to her room she murmured, “Delicacy, — culture,” and she shook her head more absolutely than ever.



CHAPTER XXVI.

THE EVENING OF THE DAY.

HRIS sat in the front of the box, at Wallack's, with John Peebles beside her, and Bertha in the other chair. At the last moment, Zoe had made up her mind to go and hear the serenaders, and Peter, well pleased to have her to himself, had carried her off in triumph, charging Peebles to see carefully after his party. Sabrina, who had “bound up her curls” as did Armida, “and put some flowers among them, as jewels might be put upon gold, and added a rose or two to the lilies of her bosom,” — Sabrina looked fair and pure as her namesake when she rose from her coral-paven bed to assist the shepherds. Bertha seemed quietly happy. Another letter from Chandos had followed them, and she read it the last thing before leaving the St. James, and on the third page he had said, “Give my love to Bertha.” So she was all in tune to make the most out of “Rosedale.”

Chris's lip drooped with a so rowful curve, and her eyes were

upon her wrist. The bracelet of sapphires were speaking to her with Max's voice, and her thoughts were busy about him ; busy among the looks and words she had got in the great parlor. She was thinking of the love, and protection, and care she had turned her back upon. There was a rustle and commotion in the stall below them, and which was also at their side, a waft of sweet odors, and Sabrina, who looked through the lattice, uttered an exclamation. Belle Brandon, accompanied by Henriquez Zambrano, and his sister Dolores, had entered, and were getting placed, arranging their drapery, and so on. Belle was enveloped in soft azure satin and swan's-down, and was bewitching and purring and creamy. And Dolores flashed her Spanish eyes, and nodded and smiled to her acquaintance, and appealed constantly to her friend, who shook her off rather, and bent her head to Zambrano's whispers. The people in the parquette were talking about them ; one of the beauties of the season, a belle, engaged to that rich young Cuban." And though Miss Brandon knew perfectly well that many glasses were studying her, and many tongues were wagging about her, she looked simple and unconscious and beautiful.

It was not long, however, before she recognized Bertha, who leaned forward to examine the dress-circle, and with a half-startled face she tried to get a view of her companions ; and then dressed her lips and eyes in radiant gladness, and fluttered her fan, and nodded rapturously. Dolores was delighted, and kissed her hand, and Zambrano bowed courteously. Bertha bent her head in return ; and seeing that Chris was still ignorant of their neighborhood, drew back into her place and kept quiet, though she and Sabrina exchanged glances.

The curtain rose upon the fourth act—the Gypsy scene. Lester Wallack was learning the song from the lips of the "round, plump bit of humanity" at his feet ; and Chris, who

had been crying, began to feel fluttered and uneasy. She could no longer fix her attention upon the Gypsy tents, and she sighed, and threw a swift glance over the faces before her, which stopped upon the box opposite, empty till now, and she met the gaze of Otho Groenveldt, fastened upon her in sorrowful, stern intentness. He was ghastly pale, and but a shadow of himself; and Uncle Alec, who leaned his head upon his white hand, was watching his grave nephew, instead of the Gypsy child creeping forth to the call of the "Lord of high degree."

Chris's lids dropped over her pained eyes, and her forehead contracted into a troubled frown, and the whiteness of snow drifted into her cheek, blanching its scarlet glow. John Peebles spoke to her, reaching down to whisper in her ear, and she forced herself to look up and reply. It was but an instant before a glad exclamation from Bertha, and a murmured communication to Sabrina, proved that she had recognized her brother, who bowed and smiled; and then Uncle Alec jumped up briskly, and the two left their box, and came round to where Chris was sitting. She saw in the mirror at her side her floating curls, her breast-knot of fairy lilies, her spotless gloves, her soft, rosy-gray wrap, even the bouquet and fan in her lap, and she studied also her face, and ruled it to her will. She remembered how he had left her, and why, and that they were thenceforth strangers. She knew the two gentlemen were in the box. She heard Bertha's eager talk, and even the light kiss she dropped upon her brother's cheek, and knew intuitively the half displeasure such a caress would awaken in him in so public a place; but she did not turn her head till Uncle Alec touched Peebles' shoulder (who retreated instantly), and took the place beside her, and the look she gave him, with her two hands, was tremulous joy.

"Oh, I'm so glad you've come home, dear Uncle Alec, so glad!" said she. She talked on, feeling that she must presently meet Otho's eyes, perhaps touch his hand. Pretty soon it came. Bertha whispered in her ear, "Chris, my brother is here," and then he came around in front of her and saluted her gravely, and sat down on the opposite chair, with his back to the stage. She saw his eyes inspect her dress, her hair, her face, and then she felt that his attention was fixed upon the jewels clasping her wrist. She remembered who owned the match gems, which were "for Otho's wife," and for one instant her eyelids flittered, and her breath came with a sob; but she let her hands play quietly with her fan, and the sapphires and diamonds gleamed like stars.

"Where are you stopping, Otho?" asked Bertha, who was still trembling with the excitement of the sudden meeting.

"At the St. James," he answered.

Then Chris knew that it was indeed his voice, which had kept her dreaming through the long hours of the silent night. They were all seated again, Otho retaining his place, and continuing his examination of Chris, speaking easily to her, from time to time, and looking in her face for her replies. Sabrina, who could not help watching them, was amazed by what she saw; the absolute power her friend showed over her emotions, or at least over their outward signs, sitting so still and so attentive, speaking in such a smooth, sweet voice, scarcely a thrill beneath its purity. Presently Otho leaned forward.

"You can give me news of my friend Max," said he.

"You mistake, sir: I know nothing of his whereabouts," she replied, keeping her eyes upon the bracelet, though a burning blush suffused her face.

"You have seen him since last Christmas," he insisted, putting his finger significantly upon the centre sapphire.

"I parted with him at twelve o'clock to-day, Mr. Groenveldt, in the parlor of the St. James," answered Chris, withdrawing her arm haughtily.

"And you do not know whither he went?" His look was proud and incredulous.

"Simply, no. I think I answered your question before. It is so many years since I said my catechism, that I am afraid I have lost my fondness for answering questions, unless I feel sure the catechist has a right to propose them."

Otho leaned back, and looked and felt offended, and spoke no more to Chris, though he was chatty and kind to his sister.

"How odd that we should all be in the same house, and not know it," said she. "Of course you are coming home to Rosenbloom with us?"

"Oh, no, my dear; he is my boy now," replied Uncle Alec. "'Lochaber-no more.' From an M.D. he is transformed into a Mexican planter. Only for a little back-set he got, and a slight illness, you would not have had a look at your big brother for ever so many years. I'm going to keep him under my eye till he gets well."

"Gets well!" He *had* been ill, then. Chris glanced furtively at his pale face. *He* had suffered also.

"Have you been very ill?" she asked, not knowing the language of her eyes.

"I suppose yes, Miss Goldsmith, but it is humiliating to reflect upon my imperfect humanity; pray do not remind me of my weakness. I am quite well now, at all events, having fought it out with disease, and conquered."

Uncle Alec felt uncomfortable. Otho finished his speech with a courteous bow, and Chris was inly amused with the Roland she had got for her Oliver, and fingered her bouquet in silence.

"Little Pet." Uncle Alec patted her hand. "You are more like poor Fred than ever."

"Do you think so? I am glad of that. There is nobody in the world who comes with my thoughts of papa so often as you, and those good times up at Craigenfels."

"We'll try, little Pet, if we can't make the old place gay again. I am going to have you all up there with me."

"I cannot come, sir," answered Chris, sighing. "It will be a long time before I sit in the pleasant library, I believe. I'm to be a teacher."

"A teacher! nonsense! Put that crotchet out of your pretty head; leave teaching to those whose vocation it is—to girls whom kind Providence has not blessed with wealth, and who feel the spur of necessity for the exertion of their best energies. There is a richer life for you; and now you are to come with me to Zoe's wedding. My guest, you know. Ah! Won't Deb go down on her knees and bless me!"

"But Uncle Alec, you don't understand; I assure you it is impossible."

"That is right," whispered Sabrina, "you make her consent; she is deaf to the voice of my charming."

"Make her! Why, I hope little Pet will not be so unkind as to refuse her old uncle a pleasure he has set his heart upon," replied Mr. Craigenfels, in a hurt tone.

"Please"—Chris laid her hand pleadingly on his—"please don't speak of it any more now, dearest uncle, and I'll tell you the whole *why* when we are alone."

As soon as the play was over, Otho lifted courteously Chris's rosy-gray cloak.

"Permit me, Miss Goldsmith," said he.

"Thanks," she replied, taking it carelessly from his hands.

"Uncle Alec is going to be my knight. Now for courtly grace. Look, Mr. Peebles; study his style."

She offered it and her shoulders to the old fellow, who wrapped her close in it, with a little hug.

"Charming!" exclaimed Peebles; "I shall put *that* lesson in practice, the very first opportunity."

Mr. Groenveldt examined the young scholar's face more particularly than he had done, before he turned aside, a trifle superciliously, and faced Belle Brandon, who, with the Zambranos, was waiting at the door of the box, all gushingness and dimples. Her smiles were not for him, however, and she ignored his presence entirely, and thrust up her little gloved hands to Uncle Alec.

"Oh, dear Mr. Craigenfels! I am so delighted to see you; how nice that you have not forgotten me! I was afraid I should have to say, "I'm little Belle Brandon. I've been constant in the practice of your lessons of piety. I'm very good now."

"And very beautiful, too, my dear girl. Well, well! this is a pleasure! So you are very good, are you? Yes; I can easily believe it; only a precious pure soul should dwell in such a lovely body. Here, Chris, Sabrina, Bertha! Heaven bless Wallack for bringing together such a host of beauties!"

Belle did not in the least mind the chilly greeting she got from the girls, but went on chatting musically. She did not mind Zambrano's black looks, either; in fact, she was getting tired of his exactions and jealousies, and quite ready to throw him over for a more eligible *parti*; and the instant her eyes lighted upon Uncle Alec's genial face, the idea took possession of her to carry off this easy-going gentleman, appropriate this Mexican mine, and queen it at Craigenfels on her own account. She had already had enough of society to understand that a

great deal of money is absolutely essential to happiness ; and she was ready to give her dream of a handsome youth the go-by.

"I'll see you to-morrow, good people," said she, as Zambrano put her into the carriage. "Meet me at Philippi."

"You take care of the ladies, Mr. Peebles," said Uncle Alec to that youngster, who was wandering about vaguely. "I'll take Miss Goldsmith off your hands ;" and in another instant she was seated by Otho Groenveldt's side ; but if the kind old fellow who sat opposite thought to get any pleasure out of his arrangement beyond a fleeting glimpse of her downcast face, as they whirled past the lamps, he was disappointed ; for the two young people scarcely spoke all the way. Every thing seemed unreal to the poor girl, and she stepped out of the carriage, assisted by the man she had worshipped, as in a waking dream.

Zoe and Peter were the first home, and pretty soon Jan and Sonsie had come in ; he with queer face, fun-lighted, and yet overclouded by vexation. The four were talking before the great window of the tea-room ; Zoe, who was in the highest spirits, pouring out little snatches of the songs she had heard, and reciting the jokes, while they waited for their friends.

"Well, Sonsie," said Peter, "how did you like your Irish play?"

"'Tis a very purty play, sir ; and the pogue was a sweet thought, and was well and bravely done of the little girl in the green spencer ; and very trim and nate she looked in it and her blue hosen and her short kirtle ; and she'd manage that spalpeen as the South wind manages the thistle-down. I liked her purty much ; but the omershaw of a fellow hisself ! — don't be talkin' of him ! He's no true boy to go sthreading about the country, disgracin' his kinsfolk ! The poor Irish people are

down-trodden and made game of, and 'tis the fashion of the Yankees to spear scoffs and jeers at them ; but no true lad would go up and down amongst ye, holding the ould country up to ridicule, — the dear land that'd be a paradise, only for the murderin' villians that's got the rule of it, bad luck to 'em !”

“You ought to have heard Sonsie rave at me,” said Jan, laughing, “as if I had insulted her. I shook in my shoes. I was certain she was about to insist upon going behind the scenes, to upbraid Barney with his misbehavings.”

“Never fear me for that,” Mr. Vedder. “I'd not give me clane tongue the job to scold the silly fool, and he a Kildare boy hisself.”

They saw the carriage stop, and Chris descend, followed by the grave doctor and a stout gentleman, and Sonsie sprang to meet her, saying, joyfully, “Ah ! my white angel ;” and she kissed her hand with the kind of adoration which her manner always had for Fred's daughter, and which, somehow, sat gracefully upon her ; and Zoe and Peter and Jan exclaimed, “Uncle Alec !” and all got hold of him at once.

“I hope you have also a welcome for me,” said Otho, offering his hand to Zoe, who glanced quickly at Chris, still and composed, before extending hers. If there was any want of cordiality, however, in her reception, Peter and Jan fully made up for it. Both were delighted to see him.

“And this is my dear friend Sonsie Eagan,” said Chris, leading her up to Uncle Alec. “You must take her into your fold, you kind shepherd.”

Sonsie courtesied, in her bold, modest way, and scanned the hearty, comfortable face before her with evident pleasure.

“Indeed, then, I think innocent lambs might be safe and happy under your guidance, sir,” said she, fearlessly. “St

John himself, in the picture of the holy apostles, hasn't a finer beard, nor a sweeter look of kindness altogether entirely."

Uncle Alec laughed, and put his mouth close to Sonsie's ear.

"Did you ever hear of the blarney-stone, my dear?" asked he.

"Oh, yes, indeed, sir, often ; but it's niver a kiss at all that I've given to it, for the reason that I'm keepin me kisses till I meet wid their lawful owner."

"Mr. Groenveldt, allow me to present you to Miss Eagan," said Zoe, seeing that Chris did not speak.

"Sonsie Eagan, and Miss Walsingham's maid, at your service," replied the Irish girl, whose eyes turned from Uncle Alec, still lighted with the pride and merry mischief his question had called up. "Mr. Groenveldt is no stranger to me, Miss Zoe. Indeed, you didn't grow very handsome those times, did you, sir?"

Otho scanned Sonsie curiously, and returned her deep courtesy with a slight bow, and a little curl of his haughty lip, evidently wondering what manner of woman she might be, so downright in her comments, and so careless of dignities ; and Jan was half amused at Sonsie's doings, and half vexed, but wholly filled with admiration for her lustrous beauty. Pretty soon the others arrived ; Peebles still maundering a little vaguely, like a body cut loose from its controlling attraction, and Sabrina walked up to Zoe in haste.

"Who *do* you suppose we saw at Wallack's to-night?" exclaimed she.

"Not Prince Arthur, nor Mrs. Stanton, nor the king of the Cannibal Islands?"

"Hush, Zoe! Belle Brandon. She had the Zambranos in

convoy, and she was, as Chandy used to say, 'blue-eyed and beautiful.' "

"Oh, ye tears! that evil spirit again! What did she say?"

"She was dressed like a duchess. Uncle Alec can tell you what she said, for she lavished all her smiles and sweetness on him."

"Yes; Miss Brandon! Oh, really a most bewitching, snperb girl, rarely lovely! quite a contrast to that flashing Spanish beauty, and the black-browed fellow, — her brother, I suppose. He rather glared at me than otherwise, I thought. Those Spaniards make bad husbands for our free-spoken, independent girls; and I hope that confiding, artless child, with her swimming eyes, that entreat love with every simple glance, won't help herself to sorrow. She reminded me very prettily of our meeting in the cars, and an admonition I gave her to practice good works. I must recollect to prove to her that I also have a memory."

The girls exchanged glances, and Zoe made a horrible face.

"We'll all go down to that magazine of wonders, that Aladdin's cave of delights, where rubies and pearls and diamonds are kept on purpose for good girls. Yes; we'll go to Ball & Black's, and we'll say to them, 'Gentlemen, show us some gems worthy of these young women you see before you;' and we'll buy. Do you like bracelets and brooches, brave lady?" asked Uncle Alec of Sonsie, who had been watching all his gestures, and listening to his talk in a sort of benevolent rapture. "We came very near being country-folk, I think, — you and I. I've seen some bonnie blue eyes, in my day, about county Kildare, — as like to yours as two peas. Can you speak Irish?"

"No, sir; me father could, but; and me mother sings some Irish songs that are sweeter than the notes in the thrushes'

throats. Me mother is a O'Rouke, sir." (Sonsie more Hibernico. Uncle Alec straightened himself, and imitated her *post* exactly.)

"Ah! county Ulster?"

"The very same, sir. God love its braes and bonny fields!"

"Well, Sonsie, we must shake hands on that; for my great-grandmother was an O'Rouke of county Kildare; and my grandmother had such a choice selection of tales, and legends, and fairy lore, as kept me pinned to her apron whenever she would open her budget, all about the Kilpies, and the 'lias fial,' or crowning-stone, which used to sing when a good king was made upon it, and schreeled and howled if a wicked man but touched it with the tip of his finger. Did you ever hear that story, Sonsie?"

"No, sir," she answered, coming a little closer to him, all ardor for the story; "will ye plase tell it to me? Sare I know a beauty that ud set it schreeeling if she but sot foot upon it."

Uncle Alec laughed at her eager face.

"Not to-night, my lass. 'Tis time to part. Thou heares that hateful watchman's cry. Past twelve o'clock. Good-night."

CHAPTER XXVII.

"LA HERIDA MAS GRAVE ; SE RECIBE DE OCULTA MANO."

THE next morning, Mrs. Walsingham, Zoe, and Uncle Alec had a good long talk in the great parlor, looking down upon Wilson's sewing-machines ; and they begged him to take Chris home with him.

"I wish her to be my bridesmaid, and I will have her. You must carry her off by force, if necessary."

"Yes, indeed," said Sabrina, who had come in while Zoe was speaking. "Yes ; and we must see to her dresses. We know quite well how her mother treats her as to money. She was so sour, when we went to Brookside, on the subject of the wedding."

"Dresses ! Of course ; get her every thing, any thing you can think of. What ! Fred's child ill-provided ! Why he was the daintiest fellow ; and he loved to see his darling arrayed like the lilies. I remember quite well how she used to go in white, and her Paris slippers and the like ! She was his idol."

Zoe enlightened the old fellow somewhat upon Chris's status, and caused him to open his eyes, and the mamma's enlarged a good deal, and spoke their minds quite freely upon the motherhood of the widow.

"How lucky that I came home as I did," exclaimed Uncle Alec, with joyous mien, and jingling the loose cash in his pockets ; "the mines, and the indigo, and the coffee, and the rest, have piled in the money this year ; what a perfect god-send, to find some good young people who can put it into use for me."

Belle Brandon entered the parlor just in time to hear these words, and her gushingness and absolute innocence were won-

derful. She threw a comprehensive glance around her, and was full of affection. After an *empresée* greeting to them all, she sank down upon the sofa, close to Uncle Alec, who returned her bewitching little smile with one of expansive benevolence, including admiration for her loveliness and perfect dress, — perfect, from the costly black velvet cloak down to the tiny buttoned boot, of which she displayed the tip from under her satin petticoat.

"I am very glad to see you, my dear," said he, "because we shall impress your taste into our service; we have arduous labors before us." Then whispering behind his hand, and close to Belle's peachy cheek, he added, "There's the *cadeau* to buy for the betrothed."

Zoe ran to fetch her mother's shawl, and met Chris just outside the door.

"Marplot has arrived," said she, concisely. She also ran over Otho and Bertha, who were coming down the hall in close conversation. "That odious girl! she's in there. I wish you had all been in bed and asleep that night, instead of poking off to the old theatre. You can't shake her off any more than you could the old man of the sea."

"Oh, a morning call or so won't hurt us," said Bertha, smiling, "and, of course, we are not obliged to return them if we don't choose. I wouldn't be so disturbed, Zoe."

"I'll tell you, Miss Bertha, I should not be in the least surprised if she wheedled an invitation to Craigenfels. I believe she is fishing for it."

"Nonsense, Zoe! I've heard her declare often and often that she'd never set foot in Roaring River again."

"Oh, grant that she may stick to her resolve, and keep us safe from her," said Zoe, speeding on her errand.

"Yes, Chris and Bertha," said Uncle Alec, continuing his

plans for the day. "We'll go to Ball & Black's, and this young lady will accompany us. I always enjoy taking a lot of beautiful girls into a jeweller's shop."

"Miss Goldsmith has developed a taste for trinkets since we parted, I think," said Belle, floating up, and lifting the arm, from which Max's sapphires had not been removed: "this is a rare gem, indeed."

Chris snatched away her wrist, and could not help glancing at Otho, who was quietly studying her; and Belle Brandon knew instantly that there was some story connected with that bracelet, and was curious to find it out, and eager to ascertain the status of all parties; and readily accepted Uncle Alec's invitation, calculating her chances of wheedling something out of somebody for her own adornment. As the girls withdrew, she fastened upon Bertha.

"Do you like being in society as much as you expected, Belle?"

Bertha did her best to be civil, while she fully endorsed Zoe's opinion of the "marplot."

"Oh, yes, I like it rather; I have attention enough, and no end of offers, and I enjoy my squabbles with Aunt Isadore. I have a scene over every article I wear; and I look passably well dressed, I think."

"You see a great deal of the Zambranos, I suppose?"

"*Toutes les fois qui je veux*," replied Belle, carelessly. "Do lores is always hanging about one."

"She's a dear affectionate girl. I became truly attached to her. She was lovely last evening in her black and gold robe, -- as bright as a star."

"She is passable, certainly, if one likes the deep, intense style; so many feelings get fatiguing, and such constant caresses; I don't fancy it myself. She is apt to look rather sal

low of a morning after dancing. Brunettes always do. By the way, it seems to me *you* haven't quite your old bloom, Bertha ; are you not well ?"

Bertha drew the long black tresses she was brushing, down over her face, and felt uncomfortable, and made no reply.

"Your brother is changed also : he gangs like a ghost. What ails you all ?"

As Bertha had no idea of talking except the baldest generalities, she replied that Otho was just recovering from a fever, and changed the subject.

"Have the Zambranos decided to remain in New York ?"

"Oh, no, indeed ! they return to their plantation this spring, and beg and implore me to accompany them ; but I have no idea of going into a shell at present. Plantation-life with Henriques Zambrano would be just a dose of that person morning, noon, and night, and he rages at anybody who as much as looks at me. I rather liked it at first,—so romantic,—but he gets monotonous. However, his idea of presents are magnificent, — I must accord him that praise."

Belle arranged her bracelets, and admired her brooch and earrings in the mirror over Bertha's shoulder.

"By the way, chérie, do you ever hear from our old friend Chandos, the spouter of Shakespere ?"

Bertha blushed painfully, and could hardly reply.

"Sometimes," she stammered ; "that is," feeling it necessary to be truthful, "I read his letters to Chris once in a while."

"Dolores is his most constant correspondent, I fancy. Not a week goes by that the little simpleton doesn't get a letter ; and such letters : six, twelve, twenty pages ; and I must do Mr. Goldsmith the justice to say, that his epistles are both brilliant and amusing, though the goose of a Dolores hides postscripts

and particular bits from me, — too tender for my melting mood, I suppose."

Bertha got as pale as a ghost, and Miss Brandon's eyes glittered as she floated off with Sabrina, who looked in to see if her friend was ready. Peter and Jan were gone to the cattle-market in search of Kerrys and Guernseys. Zoe and the two mammas went to Lord & Taylor's, and Peebles down to Nassau Street, where he wished to work the book-mine he and Chris had struck, and the others were waiting for Bertha. Pretty soon she came, looking so weary and white, that Otho immediately ordered her to stay at home.

"Ill! Bertha, ill! Why she was as hearty as a duck half an hour ago," said Uncle Alec, taking her chin in his hand. "You are tired, my pretty! up too late last night, missed your beauty sleep. Ah, well! we will put off our business another day. Jewels will keep."

"Am I the sinner, *mea culpa?*" said Belle, floating up, in virgin innocence, and brushing Uncle Alec's vest with her curls, in her loving anxiety to get a glimpse of Bertha's face. "I made an indiscreet statement. I do remember now, she got white directly. Can you forgive me? unfortunate little wretch that I am! always stepping on somebody's toes. Now I assure you, Mr. Craigenfels, I hadn't the remotest idea when I told Bertha that —"

"I am quite well indeed!" said the poor girl, hastily pushing off the blonde, who had kissed her cheek in the most childish, *cunning* penitence. "Nothing ails me,—do let us go at once."

Belle was satisfied: she had no idea of losing her pleasure, and her prospective gain, for any of Miss Bertha's sick fancies. But Uncle Alec still missed some one.

"Ah! where is our bonny O'Rourke?" asked he.

Belle was all attention at once. Uncle Alec had got Jan

position in a long confidential talk, before they slept, the night before ; and he heartily approved of his course, and filled the young fellow's soul full of delight by his praises of Sonsie.

Chris went quietly and fetched the lassie, who came, briskly, stepping and stood before him.

"An' is it me, sir, that ye'd be after wanting, sir? Sure I hope there's something I can do for you."

"Yes, my pretty O'Rouke, there is. You are to fetch your hat till we have a little step together," replied Uncle Alec, in as rich a brogue as her own.

"Who is this girl?" asked Belle of Chris.

"Her name is Sonsie ; she is a friend of ours, and shortly ; to become a pupil at Rosenbloom," replied Chris, in absolute ease. "Come hasten, dear !" she added, caressingly ; going up to Sonsie, who had heard the question and the reply.

"I thought I was not mistaken," exclaimed Belle ; "this *is* Mrs. Deacon Williams's housemaid ! What wave of fortune brings her here among gentlefolks."

Uncle Alec and Otho looked curiously at the erect Milesian, whose eyes were fixed upon the blonde, and who stood erect and fearless.

"I can aisy answer that for ye, Miss Belle ; sure 'twas nary wave at all, but the cars just ; and Miss Walsingham, whose maid I am, can tell ye why I came, not that I had any expectation of seeing you either, though I have no objection in course. Miss Mary Ann has been very ill, and she used often to be talking of you ; the picture you made, and the dresses you wore, and all that happened last year,—Faith ! ye made a busy year of it,—and as ye were sayin', these be real gentlefolks. I know now better than I used the makins of a lady,—there's truth, pr'rity, culture, delicacy, and purple blood. D'ye mind

that now, Miss Belle? Oh, yes, Mr. Craigenfels, I'll step out wid ye, and pleased, since ye are so kind as ask me."

Otho studied Sonsie Eagan's face in some astonishment, and Uncle Alec was amazingly tickled with her reply, and her upright, free, graceful demeanor; but at the same time, knowing the world, and its prejudices and customs, he was amused with the artless betrayal of surprise on the part of the "child of society," and was not by any means hard upon her, though he took occasion to change the subject.

"Otho, my boy, what a lovely show we have got with these four styles of beauty, for wax figures. We'll arrange some as soon as we get home to Craigenfels."

"I think I shall not leave New York at present. I intend to get about my engines and presses directly," looking at Chris, who flushed and fluttered."

"We won't start an argument on that subject now," replied Uncle Alec, impatiently. "'Sufficient unto the day;' and I've my hands full with these girls."

Belle unwittingly did Sonsie Eagan an especial service. Sabrina had rather stood aloof; now she thought deeply upon the requisites for a lady, and she mentally contrasted the true womanly nature she knew Sonsie owned, with the beauty, and she came out decidedly. It seemed that some one else had been thinking also; for when the Irish lassie presently returned, looking fresh as a rose, clear-eyed and modest, Otho bowed gravely to her, as they all started out together, and he took his place beside Chris as easily and naturally as if it still belonged to him; and her eyes, seeking the ground, rested upon his boot, well shaped and perfect, and thence at his gloves, and then mounted to his face, grave and pale, and she felt a little kindly sympathy. He had been ill, poor fellow, though he did not like being reminded of it. Did he have tender nursing?

She was very near asking some such question, when he spoke.

"So our sprightly friend, Miss Zoe, is about to marry!"

Something in his tone was extremely unpleasant, and sent the crimson into her cheek, and he quietly studied her countenance, her chestnut curls, her dress, and watched the play of her lips while she answered. He was cool, masterful, and courteous through all; but his demeanor irritated her; his position by her side, so easily taken, without her consent, was a trial of her nerve-power. If the Doctor knew it, if he saw her flickering color, and the old wistfulness he used to love, stealing into her brown eyes, he made no sign; he was attending to her reply, which she framed at her best.

"It is true, sir, what you have heard. 'Honor, riches, marriage-blessing' are ready for Zoe, who hurries her preparations for the approaching day; all of which she thoroughly enjoys, as she does every occupation she picks up. Zoe is a refreshing girl, so positive, so full of merry conceits and pretty whims, one never tires of her."

"You praise your friends roundly, Miss Goldsmith (with a provoking smile). The little gypsy *is* very charming and piquant certainly; and the traits you mention are extremely agreeable. In a wife, however, something more might be desired to insure happiness. I remember quite well, for instance, a summary of matrimonial needs, which I heard once, which seemed to me quite complete: 'love, respect, repose, satisfaction, concord, mutual giving and receiving.'"

Chris was startled; frightened. This fearless touching of old days, and that day among the provence buds above all, penetrated her very soul. She looked at him grave, upright, "dominant," and she half thought, hard and cruel also, and felt that she would need all her strength, all her self-poise, to carry

herself discreetly in his presence, and she would not falter or show any weakness ; but she smiled a little bitterly.

"I suppose, when I made up that remarkable estimate, whose careful repetition does credit to your memory, that I was interested in the subject. Did ever you hear an old saying, *La herida mas grave ; se recibe de oculta mano ?*"

If Chris thought to shelter herself behind her proverb, she was mistaken ; for Otho answered, —

"That reminds me of my good Max. The saying was often in his mouth. He should be of our party, being learned in choice gems."

Chris involuntarily dropped her eyes upon her sapphires.

"Did the dear boy tell you a story of a brooch he knows about ? I was promised the tale by his mother ; but the time never came for me to hear it. I believe it was wrought among her bridal days. Shall I tell you who is to have a set of sapphires, if she can be found, Miss Goldsmith ?"

Chris was deeply embarrassed, and would have plucked off the bracelet and hidden it out of sight, if she had dared, and fully resolved to do so the first opportunity. Meanwhile, Uncle Alec had paused before a window, within which stood a case of gorgeous butterflies, azure, sea-green, violet, vivid scarlet and cobalt, such as flit about the Brazilian passion-flowers ; and he waited till Sonsie and Sabrina came up.

"Roukie, did ever you see a collection of moths ?" asked he.

"Niver, sir, barrin' the cunnin' villians that's sure to be gettin' round on old muffs, sir."

She was gazing straight at Belle Brandon. A sudden thought possessed her that that blonde beauty would like to be lady of Craigenfels. She couldn't have told why she thought it ; but she seemed to know that she had such a plan, and her blue

eyes looked rather threatening, so much so, in fact, that Belle wished her disposed of, even as the good old deacon prayed to be delivered from his scolding wife,—"O Lord, let her be gently removed."

Uncle Alec took off his hat, and hid his face behind it.

"Let us walk on, my dear," said he to Belle.

"Why, Sonsie, what induced you to make such a rude speech to Uncle Alec?"

"'Tis Bible truth, Miss Sabrina, and no lie at all. What was wrong with me saying? Sure, I'd niver drame of being rude to such a kind gentleman as Mr. Craigenfels."

When Sabrina explained the force and bearing of the remark, Sonsie's eyes lighted with fun.

"The gentleman'll kindly forgive me ignorance. And wasn't it the sharp cut that I give yon blue-eyed lass that was niver any good, 'tis me sworn belief, egg nor burd! Look at her! dear young lady! a leaning on his arm, and peeping into his handsome old face. Ah! wisha! Craigenfels'll have a mistress, I'm thinking, that'll make things spin, if she gets her will. I've watched her tricks and her manners down at the Deacon's, when she usen't to think I was minding; and if it comes, she'll be worse nor the old song, 'she'll cross him and rack him till she'll heart-br'ak him,' and a sore pity for all is brewing the day he takes her home."

Sabrina had good opportunity to test her new conclusions, as she walked with Sonsie in her black dress, trim gloves and shoes. She found her bright, fresh face and deep violet eyes enjoyable, and owned that she looked like a lady, and every word she uttered, though richly twirled and twisted on her Irish tongue, proved that she had the elements of "gentleness" in her soul; and Sabrina, the lady, pointed out the objects of interest to the companion she had chosen, and chatted pleas-

antly ; and quick-witted Sonsie read her through and through. She had made her point upon Belle, and she felt merry and lively, and she poured forth her witty trifles so mirth-provoking, and took what Sabrina offered "across her gulf."

Uncle Alec consulted Miss Brandon upon the *cadeau*, and after remembering that Zoe loved brilliant stones, — rubies, diamonds, and the like, which suited her gypsy — style, she suggested pearls ; and the first thing Uncle Alec asked for was a choice of the treasures of the deep, and he laid aside a magnificent set, and really it was an admirable selection, because Peter and Jan had been in on their way down, and there were some dazzling things getting engraved with a Zoe, in some back apartment, at that very moment.

Now Miss Brandon made a discovery : gazing down among the gems, she found a green brooch ; a cluster of pansies, the two lower petals of each a precious opal, like those which are compared, in the Orphic poem, to the delicate complexion of a lovely youth ; and the upper ones formed of such amethysts as Heliodorus describes in the king of Ethiopia's ring : "and so saying, he put into his hands a ring, one of the royal jewels, an extraordinary and astonishing thing, the shank being formed of electrum, and the beasil flaming with an Ethiopian amethyst, in size, about the form of a maiden's eye, but in beauty far surpassing the Iberian sort, which blushes with a feeble hue like a rose just unfolding its leaves from the bud, and beginning to be tinged by the red of the sunbeams ; but the Ethiopian amethyst, out of its depth, flames forth like a torch ; a pure, and, as it were, spring-like beauty." Belle ordered the clerk to produce the brooch, and she took it in her hand to a window and studied it, keeping her back to the party the while. The four pansies had eyes of Spanish topaz, and were hung upon golden stems, and reposed

among emerald leaves of studded work, exceeding rare. She considered with care. They might not see the brooch. She hated to put Chris in possession of such a choice beauty, which, she spitefully reflected, was just quaint enough for her ; but she turned at length, her mind made up. The delight of stabbing a girl she hated in the presence of all who knew her story, face to face with the proud man who had made her suffer, and also inflicting the wound so delicately that Uncle Alec (who, she had assured herself by adroit strategy, knew nothing of Otho's affairs) should admire her kind impulses, her pretty eagerness to serve a friend. She floated down to the group, who had their heads together over a "regard ring" Uncle Alec was about to buy ; a secret gift to a lady he loved, and never forgot to please, and exclaimed, throwing her blue eyes upon the genial gentleman's face, swimming in childish eagerness, her dimples all displayed, and her pearls of teeth, —

"Look, Mr. Craigenfels ! look all of you ! this lovely thing for Chris ; her favorite and most cherished flower. She weaves them on her bosom ; she weaves them among her curls. She crowned with them the Sapho knot, that day of days when she rode like fair Rosamond her coal-black steed. You remember that day, Mr. Groenveldt, and our dinner up at Craigenfels ; she kissed them as they had been lovers. Come, buy it, kind sir ; and let me place it, with a wish for her future and a thought for her past."

Chris's dilating eyes were fastened upon the blonde, but she saw not the peachy bloom in her creamy face, nor the scarlet of her lips, nor her soft, floating curls ; the melodious tone of her voice jarred on her sense.

"A snake's small eye blinks dull and sly ;
And the lady's eyes they shrunk in her head ;
Each shrunk up to a serpent's eye,
With something of malice, and more of dread."

The words so possessed her that she could hardly refrain from speaking them; and yet Belle had never looked more radiantly beautiful, and, in the next passing moment, Chris lived through the wretchedness in the library, when she had stood apart, despised, shunned, and Belle Brandon's Geraldine glance, "a tongue of light and a flit of flame," had triumphed in her agony. Uncle Alec took the eager speaker's hands, box and all, and patted them kindly.

"Good little girl!" said he. "You love to give pretty Pet pleasure, don't you? Yes, yes; she shall have the brooch, if it suits her. That's precisely the use and value of such gauds, to gratify nice children. I've a small affair to settle with your bright eyes presently. Come, Chris, darling; do you like the thing of amethysts and opals? An oddity, is it not?"

"That is one reason it suits Cherie. She's an oddity, too. Of course she likes it, only she's modest," put in Belle, gayly.

Before Chris had time to gather up her thoughts, so that the "sight to dream of, not to tell," had faded, and left only the faces of her friends, Sabrina touched her, as if she would have said, "Do not permit her to trouble you," and then Chris drew her hand within Uncle Alec's arm.

"Come here, my dear, kind uncle," said she; "I will show you what I want. These ornaments are all pretty, but I was early taught to despise them. Here are the gems I delight in."

She led him to a case of bronzes, and pointed out an "Ariadne," and when they returned the pansy brooch was gone.

"Now, Miss Brandon, for the reward of good works. Since you flatter an old fellow by remembering what he says, you must let him show his gratitude. Come, pretty one, what shall it be?"

"Could you match me that bracelet on Chris's arm?" asked she.

"Chris! little pet. I do recollect. I was going to look at it when you mentioned it before. What! sapphires and diamonds! Why, this is a wonderful beauty! I am afraid our friends Ball & Black cannot show its fellow. Is it a family jewel, Chris?"

"I believe so, sir, but not of the Goldsmith family."

Chris looked deeply pained and unhappy.

"Look here, Otho, my boy. Did you ever see such an odd setting?"

"Very odd, indeed. I have seen it often."

Uncle Alec glanced from Chris's face to his nephew's, and privately concluded that she was wearing his gift, and he was more mystified than ever. The clerk behind the counter happened to be the same who had attended Max, and he looked pointedly at Chris's wrist, saying, —

"I hope the engraving pleased you, Miss! Your gentleman found a good deal of fault; but it was just as he ordered, for all that."

Poor Chris was ready to drop, and Belle went on smoothly, —

"I could fancy something blue, Mr. Craigenfels. Please don't quench poor old Chris! though I must whisper in your ear that she is a sad flirt, — spare her blushes, — and I'll let you into a secret. John Peebles is more than moon-struck about her; and such a number of bachelors as she smiles on! Ah! there's a pretty set of amethysts, all complete, sleeve-buttons, studs, inclusive."

They were very beautiful, clear as water, and lovely deep purple; and Uncle Alec held them up before Chris.

"Buy those for Sabrina," said she, softly and quickly.

"The amethysts are sold, Miss Brandon; but as you are too

"pure womanly" to require any charm against the wine-cup, we needn't mind. Show us something blue."

"How could you fancy turquoise, sir?" displaying a magnificent set in Etruscan gold.

Belle quickly observed that there was a coronet of showy workmanship, and said, modestly, —

"Those are as blue as truth, sir. I like them. But if they should be too costly?"

"Nothing *can* be too costly to reward good works."

Belle began to regret that she had not selected diamonds, but, with her possibilities, she saw them hers in the resplendent future. Sonsie and Sabrina were studying the bronzes, which Chris was explaining, and Uncle Alec came up, and said, —

"Roukie, my dear, I want to give you a brooch for the sake of the kin blood. Come and chose it."

Sonsie's face lighted.

"An' is it a brooch, sir, for me breast? Indeed, then, there's the beautiful green glass one over there would please me rarely. That one, sir."

Uncle Alec laughed heartily, and the clerk could not help joining, as he produced a fine emerald, set around with graduated beryls, three deep, and laid it down for inspection.

"Excuse the slang," said Belle to Otho; "but that girl is any thing but green."

"Roukie, I'll get that trifling esmeralda on these conditions: You shall never offer to return it to me; you shall never give it away, and you shall let me put on the match jewels when you're married."

"I'll promise all that aisy enough, sir. I'm not the girl to give away my fairings; and when married! Ye're safe enough there. The trim young bachelor that's to say 'Sonsie, will ye

marry me, for bether or for worse,' hasn't come over from Limerick yet — and small loss."

Nobody but Uncle Alec and his "fust cousin" knew what Chris's prettiest fairing was, because he tucked her under his arm, and walked off and bought it in secrecy, and chuckled; and he and she had the pleasure of putting it on, with a couple of kisses apiece, — a delicate frost-work chain, and a little watch.

Mrs. Vedder came home from her shopping in high feather, she having made a raid on Sonsie's apartment, and carried off the exact measurement of her black bombazine, and purchased a complete school-girl outfit, which she exhibited to Jan, with vast exultation. He admired the purchase, and hugged the purchaser.

"Now, mother," said he, "the next thing is to coax her to wear them."

"Coax her!" replied Mrs. Vedder.

She folded the garments out of sight directly. To tell the truth, she had been visited by sundry misgivings of the same pattern, though she so indignantly repudiated her son's suggestion.

Uncle Alec knocked at Chris's door that evening, and found Sonsie holding her "white angel" in her strong, loving arms. He insisted, in a grandfatherly way, that Chris should accompany him to Craigenfels for her vacation, and Sonsie entreated her to consent. The poor girl desired so much to see home sights again, and get a breath of native air, to hug Rainbow, and be cuddled by Deb, and renew her Horseshoe pleasures, that she was sorely tempted to brave her mother's displeasure, which she felt sure would visit her heavily, pelt her with hard words, at any rate, "nail her wi' a scriptur'"; and a remark of Uncle

Alec's finished her wavering, because it chased away a certain dread she felt.

"Otho won't go. I've tried my best ; but he is obstinate, and talks of Florida, which is simply ridiculous. Florida after Mexico is skim-milk after cream. He'd much better go up to Lake Superior or Hudson's Bay. But he is as unmanageable as a mustang. *No importa*, let him go where he likes. *No es la miel para la boca del asno*. That means, Sonsie, 'Honey is not for an ass's mouth ;' and we'll have Craigenfels all to ourselves, and make exceeding merry without him. Bertha is going ; she needs the change, poor child. They will study her to death. I'm afraid that sister of mine is as hard and persistent as her young hopeful. And now, Roukie, I can't part with you, your merry eyes and your helpful ways ; besides, we are kinfolk, you know ; and the young O'Roukes ought to be at home with the Craigenfels."

"Yes, sir ; but not the young Eagan's, and there's a power of them."

"I shall immediately proceed to make acquaintance with them ; and you, my peerless Esmeralda, must give us the pleasure of your presence. I insist upon that."

"I am sorry to refuse any thing to ye, Mr. Craigenfels ; but 'tis onpossible. Why, I'm at service, sir ! As soon as I've put in these weeks along of Miss Zoe, I must go back to Mrs. Blair, who needs me. Sure, I've played enough, and must pick up me work bravely, thankful for me bit of a good time."

"I shall see to all that, Roukie. Ruth will not let you say nay to your old cousin."

"Don't, sir, please ! I should only be in the way of the young ladies, and no company at all."

Uncle Alec looked at Sonsie, whose head was up, and her

eyes fixed upon Belle Brandon's graceful figure, which she saw through the half-open door, awaiting admission to Sabrina's room, opposite.

"Ah!" said he, "is it because you fear to intrude upon" --

"Upon yon young lady, sir? No, indeed; 'tis little regard I have for her. If she looks frosty as snow, I can shimmer like ice in the moonshine."

"Is Belle Brandon going to Craigenfels?" asked Chris, with decided emphasis.

"Yes, little pet; she promised me last evening to be of our party," replied Uncle Alec, much disturbed by the expression of the two honest faces he liked so well.

Bertha had turned the cold shoulder to the blonde that very morning in the most pointed manner, and Sabrina was loftily polite; and, as for Zoe, she snubbed her so viciously, that the innocent beauty's appealing blue eyes had haunted him for an hour afterwards. None of them manifested the rapture he expected, when he announced his victory over the reluctant darling, who feared to trespass upon his hospitality; was too poor to afford the journey; hesitated to leave her mission-people, &c. He could not understand why this lovely, innocent, artless, winning creature was so little liked among his young folks. It troubled him.

"Well, Roukie, we'll see!" he concluded. "I don't admire being put out when I have arranged a thing. We'll see. *Donde hay gana, hay mana.*"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

WHAT BECAME OF ZITELLA.

HE golden moonlight streamed over the Bayo Hermoso, and powdered its ripples with diamonds, which sparkled in the eyes of a young man, who sat in the shadow of an arbor of passion-vines, and struck the strings of a zittern, to which he sang, in a rich, mellow voice, —

“Gentle Zitella, why shouldst thou fear?
Love’s ritornello tarry and hear.”

“Hilario waits for me,” said the Indian maid, hastening on with springing step. Her rebozza half hid her face, and her little hands fingered her rosary, of which she told the shining beads, as she trod the winding path among the flower-laden, odorous trees. She prayed for Señor Aleka, and for her lover, Hilario, with whom she was about to spend an hour by the sounding sea. Prayers, mounting from pure souls, have wings to cleave the skies. Ah, pretty Zitella, be fervent; you have need of heavenly help. There was tumult in the Hacienda. The dogs were out, and the Dohle was running hither and thither, giving tongue to his deep-mouthed bay. The Indian maid had been singing among her roses at eventide, and Uncle Alec was sure he had seen her shadow on the white curtain which hid her maiden’s bower before he went to sleep, but now she was gone — breakfast hour, and no Zitella.

George Blair, returning from the Romanza, had come upon old yellow-skinned Chapeta, counting gold pieces, beneath an acacia, which she hastily covered with her petticoat, as she saw his lengthening shadow in the moonlight, gliding toward her on

the ground. The Spanish ship, so long moored in Bayo Her moso, had disappeared. George took old Chapeta by her skinny shoulders.

"Where's Zitella?" demanded he.

"Gone to the devil, I hope," she answered, yelping with laughter.

"Any news of the poor child?" asked Uncle Alec, throwing himself off his steaming bracador, and wiping his heated anxious face.

"I believe this Gorgon knows where she is," said George. "Look at the gold she is hiding! I caught her skulking among the trees last night. She hurried out of my sight, and I remember thinking she looked as if she had just finished some hag's work. Depend upon it, she knows what has become of the simple child whom she hated."

"You, Chapeta!" said Uncle Alec, in surprise.

"Me, Señor," she answered, snarling, and showing her fangs. "I count my gold. It amuses me when my work is done. What care I for the silly donceleta? I have enough to do to mind my kitchen. I shouldn't follow her, to kiss her foot, for love of her eyes, like the young men who eat at your table," leering at George.

Hilario, gay in his jaunty dress, came up in his *carratella*, humming his favorite song, "The night is not darker than thy raven hair," and he sought with his piercing glances for the little maid he hoped to find.

"Ah Hilario, what have you done with Zitella?" said Uncle Alec. "Speak up, you rogue. You need not be afraid to own it, if you have gone and married her in secret, though there wasn't the least need for you to act a sly part. Have you come to make your peace, and get forgiven?"

Though he talked in this strain, Uncle Alec saw nothing in the young fellow's face to give him any hope.

"Zitella!" exclaimed Hilario, springing to the ground. "What is this that el Señor speaks? What has happened? Where is she?"

"Come, come, I heard you troling out your favorite lure last night, and amazingly well you did it. It is not the first time I've listened to your zittern, nor the first, either, that I've seen Zitella steal out to meet you. I've had my eye on you I knew she was a good child, and I took you for an honest fellow, hot-tempered, and a trifle quarrelsome, but honest; and I meant you should have her after a while. Come, where is she?"

"I do not know, Señor. I sang no songs last night. I was over the cerros in the Hacienda del Marie, and I come thence but now."

"I am certain I heard your song last night," persisted Uncle Alec.

"Then it was that wretch Pequillo! Curses light on his treacherous soul!"

Hilario sprang to his seat, and drove swiftly away.

"I'm afraid he's right," said George. "I've seen that young Spaniard following Zitella about, holding her flowers and chatting. I wish I had given more heed to him, but somehow outward things only touch and vanish. I—"

"Have you seen Otho this morning," asked Uncle Alec, considering.

"Ha, ha," laughed old Chapeta, "he knows where the girl is hid; he knows. I'll swear that. She prayed for him by the shrine of the Roses, and she told his name with every bead. I stole up behind her, and I'd have beaten her if he had not come by, and I know she waited there to meet him. Oh! he

can tell you; he can tell; ask him — ask the still man who never speaks. Still water runs deep."

Uncle Alec was yet questioning George's face, with astonished eyes, when a cry reached them, and men came running swiftly.

"Oh, Señor! Water! water in the mine! Lost! all lost!"

He threw himself upon his bracador, and George hastened away to saddle his, and the new calamity put Zitella out of their thoughts. Don't you forget her, dear reader, because we will find her some day, and have a tale about her life and its sad consequences.

They reached the Romanza together, and found a crowd about it. The pepandores were talking and howling. A frightful accident had occurred. A party of miners were down at their work, and had cut through the chamber into another mine, which was old and undrained since the time of the ancient Mexicans, and the water rushing in had made quick way for itself, and swallowed them up in its surging flood.

Our old friend Jason, of the cars, of whose child Bertha took such care that Rosenbloom journey, was administrador of this Realito, and his face was very pale when they came up, and he was tightening his belt, making ready to descend and search the level.

"Mr. Groenveldt is down there, sir," said he, in a low voice, to Uncle Alec.

"What! Otho down there!"

"Yes, sir; he went early this morning, to inspect the Bo-viela, and I was looking for him up, when the wall gave way. I am going to try once more to get down, but I'm afraid 'tis all over with him, and the poor fellows too. The whole gang were on, sir."

"Stand back, Jason," said George, putting a hand on the administrator's shoulder, and whirling him about. "This is my work."

"I fear 'tis too late, Mr. Blair, and the walls keep crumbling. There isn't a chance for the young gentleman."

"I'll go down and fetch Otho Groenveldt, alive or dead!" and before Uncle Alec comprehended the look of hatred on his massive face, he had begun the descent. Twelve hundred steps, for in this mine the men reached their work by stairs, and went down in gangs with lighted tapers in their hats, and singing, as they descended, a morning hymn.

The frightful dash and roar of the waters below sounded in his ears long before he reached the level, and corpses floated up to his feet. His red candle lighted only a little circle in the thick darkness, and he shuddered as he recalled the scene in the Realito, among the savage rats. He grasped eagerly the drifting bodies, and glared his candle in their ghastly faces, seeking the man who had sent him from his home and broken up his life. He listened, and thought he heard a shout, and then a splash, like one swimming, and in a moment a corpse came to his hand, yet warm with its last heart-throb. It was the last of the poor miners, and the cry he heard was his scream of agony when he dashed out his life against the rocks. George plunged into the seething flood, and ploughed his way among the wrecks of the trams, the stones, and the ghastly dead, keeping his head well up, and every sense alert. He followed the gallery to a little Bovieda, like that where he stumbled upon the poor pegador, and there, in that inner dungeon, he discovered a red light, and getting carefully around to it, he found the man he had perilled his life to seek, clinging to a pillar which, though trembling, still stood the shock of the waters. Otho, who had been standing close to the cutting, inspecting the

seams and cracks, trickling with water-drops, and who had his arm raised and his face lifted, pointing out a little spinning stream, which showered spray upon them, when suddenly the waters rushed through, and swept them into a confused heap against the opposite wall, and hurled them hither and thither, and in a few minutes Otho was surrounded by the dead, who reached out to him with their tossing, limp arms, and the glare of his lamp showed him their fixed, staring eyes. The surging wave beat against him, and though he kept his hold of the rocky pillar, he was counting the moments of his life, for he had a deep gash in his leg, torn by a ragged rock, and his blood was welling from the severed artery. His relaxing hands refused longer to grasp their support, and he dropped with a splash into the torrent, so close to George as nearly to extinguish his torch, which flickered and sputtered, and then flared up again, and the giant caught his enemy around the waist, and made for the staircase. It was dreary work, among the floating sticks and dripping human forms, but he reached it at last. Only six hundred steps now, the rest being submerged ; but enough, with a dead man to carry. He stopped and took his burden by the arms, and swung him upon his back, and commenced the ascent slowly. Slowly he struggled on, and as his strength gave way he reminded himself who was the burden he was bearing up to the light of day, and steadied his muscles, and clinched his teeth, and toiled on with fresh resolution. He neared the top, and staggered. He tried to wet his lips with his parched tongue, and to shout for help, but his dry throat refused to utter a sound. His head spun round like a top. He planted his feet mechanically, and his trembling knees bent beneath him. Daylight ! and only thirty steps more ! It might as well have been five hundred, for he reeled, fell ! No ; he caught a rod projecting from the slimy rock, which held in place

the narrow stair, and help was at hand. Strong arms seized him, and the two were soon laid softly down upon the green Bermuda grass at the top of the shaft, with pallid faces and shut eyes.

A watcher kept vigil in the sick-room. George Blair had quickly recovered his manhood, and he was nursing Otho through the fearful fever which was burning up his blood. He had already learned a secret — his enemy's love for Christabel — and it added fuel to the flame of his hatred. He heard her name coupled with his own Ruthie's, and endearing words and loving epithets mingled with both, and he believed him a double villain, and longed for the hour to arrive when he could tell the sick man how he despised and loathed him — when he could strike his face — spurn him with his foot ; and he attended him carefully, watching every breath with greedy anxiety, hoarding up his hate.

It is a sad sight to see a strong man pulled down by disease ; his will a nullity, his reason tottering ; when the keepers of the house tremble, and the grasshopper is a burden. As for Mr. Otho, he might have died on the Bermuda grass, had it not been for an old Indian doctor, who was prowling around the Romanza, waiting for something to turn up, who took up the severed artery and tied it, and bound the limb with cataplasms, and he attended him with his root and herb simples, and I am not sure that he did not work in a few Aztec charms. If so, they did the patient no harm, and he mended apace. The fever took leave ; his weary brain got rest, and his tossing limbs repose, and he knew his nurse ; and begged for peaches, and followed his motions like a sick girl, and took the bitter bark and orange-leaf tea without a murmur. He was submissive.

“Only half a pomegranate, George ! Just one more chir

moga. I couldn't treat you so. I'm starving, and you give me no food, and you grudge me a smile."

George looked keenly at the pale, wasted fellow, whose dominant humors were so subdued, and while he hastened to supply all his wants, he rejoiced, because *his* time was coming. This sick man, who depended upon his care, whom disease had so robbed of his masterful pride, would be strong again presently, and then —

Hilario brought in a letter, and handed it to Otho.

"Any news of Zitella, yet, boy?" asked George, kindly.

"I shall never know the fate of my pretty betrothed."

He went mournfully away.

"Poor fellow! he carries a sore heart," said Otho. "That villain, Pequillo, deserves hanging. I hope he will get his desserts."

"If all villains of his stamp were hung, I would toss away my physic, for my occupation would be gone," said George, with a sneer most unbecoming his good, loyal face, as he placed a luscious peach in his patient's hand.

Otho studied him an instant before he opened his letter; but he was not strong enough to feel inclined to ask questions, or follow any train of thought, and he looked at the missive he held in his hand.

"From my mother," said he. He read a few lines, and laid it down, and shut his eyes, and a pained look crept into his face, and when he opened them again, he fixed them upon George, who was absorbed in his thoughts, before he applied himself to it afresh.

"This concerns you deeply, good friend," said he, holding it out, with a faint smile. His voice was low and soft, and his sunken eyes were full of tears. (Sickness makes us weak.)

He kept silence till George had read the letter, though his face worked and flushed.

"Come, dear, good, conscientious fellow, you've been nursing a man whom you believed a scoundrel. I wonder you didn't leave me to my fate, yonder in the mine, and I, poor short-sighted fool, *I* took *you* for an unprincipled rogue, who had left behind him a rare pearl of a wife for greed of gold. Well, we were neither of us to blame. We can't take any more out of ourselves than God has put into us. I little thought, when I tried to get a sight of Ruthie's face, and offer help and sympathy, that *I* was the cause of all her sorrow. Come, George—friend, preserver—take my hand, and believe me when I say that I love your Ruthie with the pure love I give my sister, and I love you dearer than a brother. I know how rich and bountiful you are, in every thing that makes a man."

The giant dropped the letter, which was a detailed account of the trouble — George's disappearance, and Ruth's life and sufferings, and spirited comments upon the whole — and a recommendation to her son to endeavor to get some plan afoot, by which the wedded pair might be brought into harmony again, and to bestir himself vigorously in the matter, since he had been used as an instrument of their unhappiness, and some vacillating opinions of the character of Belle Brandon, whiffing between the belief that she was a demon in the shape of female loveliness, and an idea that she might be, after all, only a thoughtless, fun-loving girl, giddy and rash, carrying frolics to the verge of crimes.

George sank upon his knees by the bed-side, and his great frame shook with his sobs. "My poor, poor Ruthie! how she has suffered!" were the first words he uttered. Half an hour later, he left his patient, composed and quiet, and the two men were friends for life — such loving, tender friends that people

wondered when, by chance, they saw them exchanging hugs and kisses like women. No matter how proud and distant Otho was to others, George got always soul-full tenderness.

The giant came out upon the broad veranda, where Uncle Alec was smoking, with his feet upon Dohle, while the tame tippir's calf rooted his hand.

"Mr. Craigenfels," said he, like a school-boy asking a holiday, "I want to go home."

"Had pie enough?" asked Uncle Alec, laughing. He referred to an old story he was fond of telling, about a bashful lover, who went to visit his sweetheart, and instead of making love, set in a corner and twiddled his thumbs. Finding she could get nothing out of him, Miss Nancy bethought herself to feed the animal, and she plied him with pie, which he took because he was too diffident to refuse. He finished one, she brought another; he swallowed the last piece, stuffed to the lips, but still thankful to have exhausted the supply, and wiped his mouth on his bandana, when lo! she appeared on the threshold bearing a third! He stumbled to his feet, toes in, elbows out, and his face screwed into a piteous snarl. "I don't want no more pie! I want to go home!" said he.

George was too deeply moved to smile at Uncle Alec's fun, who looked at him observing how all alive he was, and the old fellow felt happy. His troubles and worries were about to end. And when the giant said, "I want to see Ruthie, sir. I must start immediately," he was sure that a man who could speak his wife's name with such a thrill as that, *must* be a good fellow, ready to take up all his duties and responsibilities; and the doubts and fears he had been carrying, a heavy, wearisome load, dropped off like Christian's burden. His vicarious sufferings were needed no more. Ruth had a good husband, and

George a good wife. That one answer proved it, backed by the true soul which set throned in the young giant's eyes.

' Well, I call that odd, now ! Here you have been all these months, and nothing could I get out of you, for all my cross-questioning." (Deeply as George was stirred, he could not help smiling at the idea of cross-questioning from his genial host, who had so much respected his young friend's reticence as never to make one inquiry.) " And here you burst out all of a sudden, and you must go home ! "

" I have been a deuced fool, Mr. Craigenfels ! and my wife is an angel — a poor broken-hearted girl ! but I can't talk about it yet. When I have set things straight, and am my own man, in my own place again, I'll tell you the whole story ; but I must start directly, sir."

" We'll all go, my boy," said Uncle Alec, cheerily, tossing away his segar. " I am delighted to hear you say so. Otho has got enough of Mexican mining for the present, and I should like an excuse to get back to Craigenfels, and will be off in a couple of days. We'll swing our sick man into a hammock, and put him between four stout fellows, and you and I will take our horses, and by the time we reach the post he'll be a new creature, and the voyage will set him up completely : and, by the way, what do you suppose was in that box we took out of his pocket, after you fished him up ? Look here — not that it makes a great deal of difference, only you might like to get your title from your father better than me — that Romanza, where you went fishing, like St. Peter, and caught your man, is yours of right. Otho picked this box out of a queer chest he found in the *Bevieda*, all rust and falling to pieces. Mercy only knows the motive of the hide — some deviltry, very likely ; but there it is ! You have often told me your father sunk his property in an old silver mine, and that the title was stolen from him."

"So he did, sir; but the title had lost all value, for the machinery was too light for the work, and he had sunk his money in the nasty hole, which was as full of black mud and dirty water as it is to-day."

"Very likely, George. I know quite well that 'much coin is hushed within the hollow mine of earth' at present, which was sucked down by bad management or ripe dishonesty; but you know how the Realito pays for working, and what engines we have to pump it clear again. You had best continue good Jason in his office during your absence, and you may draw on me for funds to drain, and start afresh. I fully believe the mine is exhaustless, and I must congratulate you upon such a Romanza, well named prosperity. Only, be merciful as to arrears, good George, because you must consider that for ten years I have believed the property my own."

"Am I a rich man, Mr. Craigenfels? Oh, Ruthie! dear, good, loving Ruthie! let me live to make up to her a little of the misery I have caused her, and the bitter, wicked wrong I have done."

George, the athlete, who towered above his fellows, who rejoiced in his strength, covered his face with his hands, and sobbed like a boy. And Uncle Alec, who generally had counsel and cheeriness for everybody, was fain to keep silence in his presence, and to "wipe his weeping eyes." And so it was that Otho met Chris, at Wallack's, where they played Rosedale, wearing Max's bracelet of sapphires upon her arm.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE WIDOW HUGELY ENJOYS HERSELF.

JOHAN PEEBLES declined Uncle Alec's invitation, ³⁸ pressing, to accompany the young ladies to Craigenfels. The poor young fellow had asked a question in the great drawing-room of the St. James, and got his answer; and after a sleepless night, he had made up his mind to try to feed his soul on Greek roots, and take the professorship which awaited him at the end of his college course, and eschew women forever. Chris went up and played once more, Max's song —

"There wandered a lady upon the strand,
Her fair hair bound with a golden band."

And there was a little sore spot in her heart as she remembered him, the yellow-haired, composed and stately, whom she could have liked so much for a friend; and the last notes of the refrain still trembled on her lips, when Otho Groenveldt came striding in, his overcoat upon his arm, and valise in hand. He scanned her gray suit, shepherdess's hat, embroidered reticule, and the dainty gloves she had laid upon the piano, while her fingers were busy with their farewell to the St. James, and said,—

"How much time have we, Miss Goldsmith?"

"Time for what, sir?" she asked, in alarm.

"Before starting, of course. Perhaps you are not aware that I intend to make one of your party to Craigenfels. Indeed, I did not decide it till about fifteen minutes ago."

Chris's trembling fingers went astray among the keys, and she gazed at the blank wall before her, determined to exhibit no emotion.

"That was a very old melody you were singing — not to be found in young ladies' music books nowadays, I think. May I ask you where you learned it?"

Chris looked at him. He had come around, and was leaning on the piano, in front of her, and she felt sure he had heard Max sing Sintram's song. His face said as much, and she replied quietly, giving, the while, close attention to the sharps of the arpeggios she was trying,—

"Dr. Max sung it here one morning, while he was waiting to see me."

Zoe came in, chatting to Sabrina and Bertha, Peter following with bags and parcels, which he deposited on a sofa, and they all compared their watches.

"Just in time for a nice song, Bertha," said Zoe. "Come, Chris, give place, if you please. This cantatrice is about to render the Tyrolean echo and jodel."

"I think Bertha will not choose to sing in a hotel parlor," said Otho, quickly.

"Why not, pray, when she has her dearest friends for audience?" demanded Zoe, facing about.

"That is a whim peculiar to my super-fastidious brother," answered Bertha, with a mollifying laugh; "he is so afraid I shall be conspicuous, and that would entail the probability, you see, of *his* being pointed out as my kinsman."

Zoe wheeled about, uttering a petulant exclamation, which was not flattering to the young doctor. And Christabel rose from the piano, looking and feeling offended with the pointed reproof, and withdrew to the window, where she was soon joined by Sonsie, who studied her face, seeking the happiness she lacked the power to bestow upon her "white angel," whom she ardently desired to see always in harmony with herself. She discovered only stormy discontent and unrest there now,

for Chris was much disturbed, and would gladly have withdrawn from the party, and stolen back to Rosenbloom ; and she felt it hard that Otho should join the company, and make her talk and meet him and look at him, just as his humor dictated, besides bringing her to book so autocratically for her actions, which was certainly no business of his ; and then she heard Belle Brandon conversing gayly with Uncle Alec, who had been to fetch her and just come in with her on his arm, and in high feather. And poor Chris felt sure that the nice month she had hoped for was spoiled, and the object of her thoughts came up and offered her a couple of books which he extended with a smile.

"A pair of old friends, I believe, Miss Goldsmith. You selected them as *compagnons de voyage* last year, and I surreptitiously appropriated them ; which theft I did not remember, however, till it was too late to make restitution."

Pollock and Homer ! her father's books. When she left Roaring River, *en route* for school, she took them as light reading, to wile the tediousness of the journey. How should she comport herself towards this quiet, grave man, who was armed cap-a-pie, and who so thoroughly knew all her vulnerable points ?

"You have had some experience since then, and what was so exceedingly enjoyable from its novelty, may be less absorbing to-day. Will you permit me to be the guardian of your learned authors till you need them ?"

"Thanks, Mr. Groenfeldt. I am an independent female now, and fully capable of taking care of my possessions. I will not trouble you, nor give you another opportunity to make such a dexterous side-thrust at my carelessness."

Otho flushed up to the roots of his hair, and looked deeply hurt.

"Indeed, Miss Goldsmith, I had no such intention. Pray do me the justice to believe it."

Now he had got an advantage, and he reaped a benefit from it, and made the most of it, for Chris was so sorry and ashamed of her rude speech, that she carried herself quite humbly during the half hour of waiting.

Zoe came up and thrust her hand into Sonsie's, and pulled her away into a corner, and Jan joined them, and the three stood whispering over a magnificent set of opals which the little Gypsy had purchased for Sabrina, "out of revenge," she said, "for calling me names," and Belle floated up to them.

"Excuse me, Zoe, chérie, but I think I have dropped my *mouchoir* on the stairs ; may I send your maid to fetch it ?"

Jan colored indignantly, and Zoe haughtily replied,—

"If you mean my friend Sonsie, with whom you see me busily talking, I must tell you that I cannot spare her for any errands, and you had better go yourself, perhaps."

Sonsie was regarding steadfastly Jan Vedder during this colloquy, and trying to discover whether any spark of his love for the blonde still remained, and she felt quite sure that it was dead, yea, and forgotten ; and for some unaccountable reason, she was glad to know it, and her spirits rose with the knowledge ; and she laughed merrily, as she replied,—

"Ah, wisha ! Miss Zoe, ye must not disown a maid of yer own hiring. I am glad to be it. Ye are as pretty as beads, and as sweet as a primrose, and I don't mind running for Miss Belle, either. Sure, I've trotted the two futs off me, a score of times, up stairs and down, at her bidding. She was always the glib one for getting work out of other people and sparing her own strength. Och ! Miss Belle, I beg pardon, but is it a freckle that ye're getting on ye're bit of a nose ?"

Jan laughed, and said,—

THE WIDOW HUGELY ENJOYS HERSELF.

"Oh, do not disturb yourself, Sonsie. I'll hunt the handkerchief for Miss Brandon, and of course I shall claim the usual reward at the close of the little game. It is out of fashion to do something for nothing."

Belle took in the relative situation of the parties at once, and foresaw plenty of nice opportunities for enjoying her favorite amusement. Jan Vedder's ring was on her finger at that moment. She had nearly forgotten the young man's existence, till she met him so gushingly in the St. James parlor. She had her hands full with an absorbing scheme, but she reserved some cutting flings for him.

Chris's conversation in the window was so absolutely enjoyable, that she forgot her vexation, her past, every thing, in the pleasure of hearing Otho talk, and it was not till they were summoned to the carriage that her dreary loneliness settled down afresh upon her. Belle remarked, gushingly,—

"It really seems like old times, to see you two together. We used to call them Pyramus and Thisbe, Mr. Craigenfels, such enwrapped talkers as they were."

The beautiful blonde was thoughtful, full five minutes after she had got her seat by Uncle Alec in the car, trying to solve the meaning of the look she received from Otho, in exchange for her bit of innocent waggery, and Chris was effectually silenced. Little Mrs. Vedder had overworked in New York, and was ill all the first day of the journey, and lay on her big boy's arm, her eyes shut and her forehead contracted with pain; and really and truly, Jan had never been so interesting to Sonsie as while she watched him petting his pretty young mother so tenderly, his soft hat pushed back over his thick curls, and his thoughts busy about her comfort, and she readily ran his errands and felt absolute sympathy with them both. They were nearing Roaring River now, and Chris had been to the full as

uneasy and uncomfortable as even Belle could have desired. After watching for some time the antics of a couple of children, who were jubilant over their journey, she went across and sat down by Uncle Alec.

"I wish I was a little girl, going somewhere, like those over there. They make frolics out of every thing. Their rising up and sitting down is funny, and the absolute possession of that window to open and shut every other minute is an untiring joy."

"You, pet ! why, you are a little girl."

"Oh, no ! not careless and gay like those."

"That won't come back in this world, pet. When we get to heaven we shall all be young."

"I don't see how that can be, Uncle Alec. I can't ever know any less than I know now, nor feel any less ; and as for being light-hearted, the time for me to be pleased with a rattle, and tickled with a straw, is gone forever, anywhere, I'm sure. It is the soul, singing for gladness, that I long for."

Uncle Alec put his arm around her, and leaned her head against his shoulder.

"There, there, rest a little, pet. You are going somewhere ; you are going home with me."

After a struggle with herself, and some reflection, she whispered in his ear. He took off his Scotch cap, and stroked his long, silky beard, looking down into her eyes, before he replied. —

"Certainly not, my queenie ! I'll drive you down to-morrow ; or you may ride Zephyr ; but you are my guest for this vacation. I shall hold on to my prerogative."

She dropped her face, and her eyes filled. She was trying to cast from her this sense of quiet security, and kind, attentive regard she was sure of in his house, and making up a resolu-

tion she knew was needful, and her red lips settled into their firmest contour ; but she could not quite speak it yet, her true reasons were so very difficult to put into words. The woods and rocks sped past them, and Roaring River pealed his resonant song, and a mile or two more would bring them to the station.

"I must, Uncle Alec," said Chris, raising her head, and looking into his good, kind face. "You will not be angry, I know, even if I fail to keep my promise to you. I fear I shall have very chilly welcome, but that is the place for me."

The genial old fellow followed a stray eye-beam, which lighted upon the grave young doctor, absorbed in his "Eclectic," his face stern and unsmiling, and he made up his mind to ask him a straight question, as soon as he got the opportunity. In the meantime he said caressingly, —

"Must you, little pet? Well, well, we'll see about it. You shall stay just where you can most enjoy your play-time. I'll manage to get you pretty often, and you shall have Zephyr for yours. Either way, I'm glad you like Zephyr, pet, and I shall admire you on his back, I know. Your papa talked much about your horsemanship, and he meant you to have a beauty of your own, and a span for your currie. I shall have to attend to those things as soon as you leave school. I'll be your papa. Oh dear! I didn't mean to make you cry. There, there! don't spoil your pretty eyes. We'll have a good little time. Here we are. Now then!"

Belle exulted openly when she heard the order given to drive to Brookside. She had tried many ways of ascertaining just how the party was to be disposed of. She had an idea that Chris and Sonsie were going up to Craigenfels, and she wanted a clear field for her "little game," therefore she was delighted to find that they were to be dropped on the way, and she counted

Bertha as a mere nobody, "She's so mopy and poky," said she.

It was just at evening, misty and quiet, when the Celtic lassie followed Chris into the carriage, after bidding a merry good-night to Jan and his mother, and refusing lightly their offers of assistance, and gayly parrying their pressing invitation to accompany them to Brookedge, "where," said Mrs. Vedder, "there's a nice room, all in white, looking out to the river and the boat-house, that would just suit you."

"Many thanks, ma'am," replied Sonsie; "me service bein' up wid Miss Zoe, I am just after biddin' her good-by, and I'll go back to me old mistress till school-time comes; but it is very kind of ye, and I'm iver so glad I went in yer company. I've got a deal of idication amongst all the teachin' things. And Mr. Jan too; I think you've got a little, also, sir, and I'll run down in the morn to Mrs. Slocum's, and inquire how comes on the siven children we sent her. Wasn't it a brave letter that he wrote you, sir? Oh! I like Captain Slocum!"

Sonsie let Chris out of her arms when the carriage stopped and kissed her hand as she bade her good-night, and Uncle Alec took her up the long avenue.

"I don't fancy this break-up in my plans, child, at all, but I'll not say 'nay' to Fred's daughter, if she were as full of whims as a rose is of leaves, though it may be you are right. There is a duty you owe your mother, and you are a good little girl, to be willing to put yourself outside of all the frolics up there, so as to fulfil it."

"Oh, Uncle Alec! It isn't that," stammered Chris, who felt that she did not deserve his praise, "but — I cannot tell you indeed."

She lifted the latch, and they walked through the wide hall into the old oak parlor, where she and Otho had passed so

many pleasant hours, where Chandy had been so kind and so tormenting, and the place was full of them. There was not an article of furniture but spoke of those last months, so complete, and from which she had drifted so far away.

The widow sat before a little table, a pencil in her hand, at work upon some papers, statements, and bonds, which she huddled into her big Bible as she heard the approaching footsteps.

"I've come home, mother!" said Chris, feeling the glamour of her parent's presence, as if she were a child under the iron rule once more; "I've come home; will you not give me a little kiss, and say you are glad to see me?"

"The land sakes alive!" ejaculated the fond mother, jerking her head back from her child's proffered lips. "Glad! I don't tell no lies. What're you home for? I should admire to know! Walkin' in unbeknown, like a strollin' tramp, this time o'night. Well! been turned out o' school? If you have, you needent come for me to take yer part. I shan't on principle."

"It is vacation time, mother. All the girls were coming, and I did want so much to see the old place, and Zoe is going to be married. I hope you won't mind. I'm not going to stay long. I have not done wrong, have I?"

"Done wrong! Yes, you have. What business had you to be galavanting off without my leave? Dident I tell you to stay where you was till you'd got enough on't?"

"Yes, mother; that is, I saw Chandy's letters. You never wrote to me, you know, and I did not mean to disobey, but they urged me so much. Don't take it hard. This is Uncle Alec, mother. You haven't spoken to him yet. He's been very good to me."

"Humph! I want to know! Du tell!" said the widow sourly, eying the old gentleman.

"Yes, madam. Good-evening, madam. I brought your daughter," said Uncle Alec, waving his Scotch cap indignantly at her, "and I propose to see her safely returned among her friends in due time. Her feeling of respectful duty to you — a feeling which I never honored in her as I do at this moment — a most remarkable emotion, madam — I say, her respectful duty to her mother interfered with my plan, which was to give the over-worked scholar a little pleasure up at Craigenfels. She, *good child*, insisted upon coming to her father's house instead of mine, which is also *hers* any time she will do me the pleasure to use it."

"The land sakes. What highfaluten folderols!" answered the widow, glowering unpleasantly at the old fellow's silken beard and ruddy face, and his bright eyes, which were just now kindled with peculiar light. "I've heard folks talk before, and you are very much mistaken, sir, I can tell you! She hain't got no right just now, except where she come from, and if it's your doin's tollin' on her off, I'll thank you to mind your own business, and leave my girl alope. As for *you*, miss, you needn't think I'm goin' to connive at your trampin' up and down the country this style. Where d'ye get all yer money?"

Chris was looking at the widow during this affectionate speech, and secretly wondering if she had always been so ugly. But the perfectionist had progressed in her absence, and had got so far in her sort of piety as to reject all outward adornment, all ekings out of humanity's failures, such as false teeth, and false hair, and even her beloved spit-curls were pasted back, and her scanty gray locks were dragged together and tied and held in prim durance by a horn-comb, and she wore no bows or brooches, and her face was as hard as a limestone rock, and her lips were thinner and bluer than ever, and her beads of eyes glowed like fiery coals. She was inly rejoicing that Chris

had returned unbidden. She had got her now at her mercy, no Chandos to interfere and be troublesome or loving to the poor child, who would be forced to take up just such a life as she chose to throw at her, and as she mentally said, while devouring her with glances, "to put her through a course of sprouts;" and also she had an opportunity to snub her husband's old friend, who was cousin to Elinor Walsingham, and give him a good dig for meddling."

"Well, take off your bonnet—do! You was in a dreadful strait to get away from here, and you went, and I shall be thankful if I don't find out you've been disgracin' me some way. I don't caccalate to spend no more money on you, no way. You'll come smack down to common doin's and common folks, after this!"

"Must I leave school, mother?" asked Chris, in alarm. "Don't say that. I cannot do it."

"Can't? how're you goin' to help yourself? You *have* left it, and I rather guess I can keep you, if I set out to."

"It appears that you do not quite comprehend the situation, madam," said Uncle Alec, getting red in the face through his superhuman efforts to keep cool.

"This is vacation-time, when the young ladies visit their relatives, and make merry among them, enjoying the sweets of home."

"I'll sweeten it for her! She won't want no merlasses."

The widow smiled, and snapped her eyes, and Uncle Alec burst out, —

"Ye gods and little fishes! I don't wonder poor Fred died! Such an infernal —" and without giving Chris time to think, he tucked her under his arm and dragged her off. "Good-night, madam. You'll hear from me to-morrow," he called out, as he absolutely ran down the walk, and pushing the af-

frighted girl into the coach, he was just about to get in himself, when he saw the driver leaving the trunk according to directions, and he dashed out after him.

"Here, you fellow! fetch away that luggage. It don't belong here. Craigenfels is the place," and he followed the grumbling hackman back to the house to make sure his orders were obeyed.

"Let that there box be! and take yourself off," screamed the widow; "and you, Christabel, you come right back into the house. What d'ye mean! trampin' off along of that strange man? Ain't you ashamed?"

As the driver said afterwards, when relating the story in the stable office, "The old beauty sot down on the trunk, and I thought I'd let her sot, and I did."

"Thank Heaven! You are a strange woman, madam. Whatever sort of man I may be, Fred's daughter has got friends. She shall not stop here, to be brow-beaten and ill-treated, while Craigenfels stands on yonder hill; and as for the box, you can sit there till morning, if you like. There are dry goods enough in Millville to fill another, I suppose, and if not, we'll get over a lot from Paris. I wish you a very good evening, madam."

The widow was triumphantly belligerent. She had a large amount of pungent juices hoarded up, withered as she looked, and of the bitterest sort. In fact, they had found no natural outlet since her daughter's departure, and she was enjoying herself hugely.

"What have *you* got to say about it? If you had wanted to order children round, you'd orter got married, and had some of yer own. My girl's come back of her own accord, and you just empty her out of that there team, double-quick. She shall go right straight to work."

"She shan't," said Uncle Alec. "She shall not be forced into a life she pines under. Don't lay any such unction to your soul."

"She shall!"

"*She shan't!*"

"SHE SHALL!"

"SHE SHAN'T!"

Chris could only guess the tenor of this pleasant dialogue, as she lay sobbing in Sonsie's arms, not daring to go back, and not daring to go on. Uncle Alec came striding down the avenue, pulled open the door, shut it with a slam-bang, and threw himself upon the cushion.

"Oh, Uncle Alec! how dreadful this is. Do let me get out. I must not go with you. Oh, why did I come at all."

"Don't take on, pet. You have done nothing wrong; it is no crime to come home to your father's house, to your mother. Cheer up, queenie, and forget the last hour. I declare I am as hot as the blazes [fanning himself.] Such interviews are exhausting! We will have a magnificent vacation in spite of the — everybody."

This was a very mild ending of the old fellow's sentence, compared with what rose to his lips; very, indeed.

They stopped at the Horseshoe, and Sonsie, who, it seemed, must have bestowed no end of her magnetism upon her "white angel," who was composed and comforted by her companionship, impressed a final kiss upon the hand she held, and murmured a fervent prayer over it, and then jumped out into the darkness, promising to come up on the morrow, and she and Uncle Alec stood on the porch waiting for admission.

"Roukie, it seems not fair for you to cut loose from us in this way, and leave poor little pet, who needs you. She had

a tough interview, I can tell you, with that old lady. I wish I could make you see your way clear to keeping with us. I know it would be of no use to coax, unless you feel the propriety of the act."

"Indeed, then, I think I'm not to get in here at all!" answered Sonsie, peering under the curtain. The house is silent, and even the dog is away. I wonder what ever it can mean. Miss Ruthie usen't at all to go abroad at night."

"Nothing alarming, I dare say. Perhaps some business took her to Toptown. Her money is deposited there, I know; but it is evident the place is empty, so you will be obliged to have our company. Come, leave off prying about, and calling absent people, and stirring up the sleepy echoes, and get into the carriage. There is a lady inside who will be glad to have you back, and I'll send Thomas down in the morning and find out all about Ruthie, or I'll drive you myself. I dare say she'll be home by that time, and you can pick up the service you long for so ardently."

Chris, utterly fagged, went straight to bed, without seeing anybody except Deb, who came and petted her, and hushed her sobs, for the poor child was a little hysterical, in spite of Sonsie's magnetism, and held her on her motherly old breast, where Bessie used to lie; and Deb longed to know what it all meant; why her darling young lady suffered, and why she was permitted to stay in hiding like a culprit, when the others were all below in the drawing-room, from whence Belle's rippling laughter reached them at intervals, and her eldritch singing. Deb took to Sonsie at once. She had heard all: how she nursed Bax Williams and his sister, and of her mission work, and the way she deported towards Christabel won her heart of hearts. Her blooming comeliness, which the fatigues of travel

could not blur, charmed her eyes, and after she got alone with Thomas, she could not sleep for talking about the two girls in the tower-chamber, looking up the mountain to the little church whose spire pointed toward Heaven.

CHAPTER XXX.

SONSIE IS INTERVIEWED.

HRIS'S eyes were heavy, and her step languid, when she descended to breakfast. Otho was waiting in the hall, and offered his hand.

"You have slept ill," said he, studying her face.

"I was over-tired last night," she replied, turning away, his tone was so kind.

"A walk in this good, bracing air will suit you. I must have you to come up the mountain, and we will look in at the little church, and say our prayers together."

Chris met his glance, friendly and positive, his smile so grave, and yet so restful-sweet, and she felt that he was merciless. Determined to have his own way, and take his old position, and make all her words in the great ball-room at Rosenbloom of none effect, as far as suited his humor, and she withdrew her hand.

"I've already disposed of my morning, Mr. Groenveldt," said she, and passed on into the breakfast-parlor.

"You here!" exclaimed Belle, arching her handsome brows. "I had no idea we were to be favored with your delightful society at so early a stage of the proceedings. Truly you must have risen betimes."

"About fifteen minutes ago, I think," replied Chris, coolly.

"Ah, you sly Chris," spoke up Bertha, with a little squeeze of her friend's waist, "you came up last night, and never let us know! That is so nice! I told Uncle Alec to beg and plead, and take no denial."

"I did," said the host, who came in just in time to hear her speak, "I did. I wrestled with the angel, and I prevailed."

"Oh, dear Mr. Craigenfels! This is so perfectly charming!" said Belle, going up with both hands out; "absolutely gorgeous. Now we may play at housekeeping, may we not? I do so love to sit at the head of the table, and give orders. We had a magnificent dinner up here last summer, sir, but you were not present then to round the charm. Chris remembers all about that day, don't you, chérie? and what fun we had telling fortunes with the daisies. *You* do, I am sure, Bertha, Chandos was so gay, and quite devoted to you, but he had not seen Dolores then, you know. *Eh, bien!* such is life. *Aujourd'hui tout, demain rien*: do come with me and fetch a breakfast-posy. I am afraid of your gardener; but you will not let him hurt me, will you? and you shall force him to give me some — shall I say pansies, Mr. Groenveldt?"

"You can say any thing you please, Miss Brandon," replied Otho, pointedly.

"That person is as cross as two sticks this morning, isn't he?" said Belle, pushing her hand within her host's arm. "Travelling tries people's tempers. Do you know, if I were going to be married, I should like to take a journey with the *perhaps* first, as a test. *You* are so charming a traveller, Mr. Craigenfels! Really, I don't see how you can ever leave this delightful old place; but it is only we poor houseless, homeless little wretches, who know how to prize home." She heaved a deep sigh.

"If I had half a dozen such young ladies as Miss Brandon to keep me company, I could never tire of it," said Uncle Alec, pleasantly.

"Half a dozen, sir!" pouting very prettily. "Am I of the variety which is counted by the half-dozen! I don't like that — there!"

"Oh no, dear child," laughed Uncle Alec; "you should reign supreme."

Belle threw a gushing glance into his eyes, bewitchingly pleading, and Uncle Alec was still enjoying the sweetness of it, when Thomas came up, and said, —

"Breakfast is served, sir."

"Come along, little simplicity, who wishes to be 'one only;' bring your flowers with you, and begin your housekeeping. Let me see how you will look at the head of my table. Come, my child."

Belle veiled her eyes beneath their long lashes, lest her exultation should be too apparent, and replied in a very low tone, —

"If only you would not call me your child, sir; it makes me feel such a baby, as if you looked down on me."

"What shall I say, 'my precious darling'?" asked he, much amused with her artless *naïveté*.

"That sounds much nicer," she answered, lifting her eyes in absolute candor. "Say it in Spanish, please, Mr. Craigenfels."

"*La mia Tortolita preciosa* — how do you like that?"

"It is very sweet on your tongue, sir." She repeated the words in her soft accents, making mistakes and getting corrected. "Will you teach me Spanish, sir?"

"Very willingly, my precious turtle dove; that is what you have just called yourself. None of the señoritas have such beauty as you. I like our girls best."

Belle paused before the mirror, hanging on his arm, and smiled to his image.

"I am glad my face pleases you. I have never forgotten yours. It was very good of you to fetch me to this grand old house. I hate bustle, and parties, and all that ; quiet happiness is so full of content."

She took the place he offered, and proceeded to discharge its duties with charming grace. His turquoise brooch was at her throat, and the bunch of hyacinths he plucked for her were in her flower-vase. She lifted it occasionally, and inhaled their odor, and then he, sitting opposite, saw her beautiful eyes above them, looking smilingly at him, and her creamy face, framed with soft, light floating hair, and he thought for the hundredth time, "a most lovely child."

Sonsie came in after they were all seated — indeed, far progressed in their repast. She had risen early, and been all over the farm-yards, inspected the chicken coops, looked into the stables, churned Deb's butter, seen the cheese into press, milked a couple of cows for Thomas, and received a bunch of choice flowers for her "white angel," as a reward, and she walked briskly — fresh, violet-eyed — and she smiled as she held out the posy, close clasped in her little fist. Chris also smiled, and put up her lips for a kiss, as she accepted the love-offering.

"Sweet peas on tiptoe for a flight,
With wings of gentle flush, so delicate white ;
And taper fingers, catching at all things,
To bind them all about with twining rings."

!said she, pointing to the chair at her side, over which Sonsie leaned an instant, her attention concentrated upon Chris and her poetry, trying to secure every word, rank and file, so that at first she scarcely heard Belle Brandon's voice.

"Was there ever any thing so opportune, dear Mr. Craigenfels ?

Is this an enchanted castle, where one gets just what one wishes for? Do you know, sir, it was on my lips to say that our game of housekeeping could hardly be complete without that very girl (pointing to Sonsie), who excels in waiting, as indeed she should, for I trained her to adroitness, and quick zeal, and lo! I lift my eyes, and there she stands, all ready to begin her duties. It savors of magic, indeed; it is very kind of you, sir. You certainly are the perfection of a host."

Sonsie was looking full into the blonde's cloudless face as she finished, and her own lost all its crimson.

"Augh! is it me, that ye'd be flyin' at as wicked as a weasel, Miss Belle? Sorra a fancy have I for being a maid to the likes of ye, then. I am obedient to Mr. Craigenfels just now, who ordered me to his table, to sit beside Miss Chris; but rather than eat meat with one I know quite well, I'll go out to the kitchen, where there's a couple of honest old hearts beatin' wid goodness. Excuse me, sir."

"Sit down, Roukie," said Uncle Alec, whose face was as red as if *he* had said an unpleasant thing; and he deeply regretted Belle's innocent mistake, and blamed himself that he had not told her Sonsie's position. Poor city child, where Irish girls were invariably Irish servants, how could she possibly understand any other phase of Celtic life than the one she was familiar with?"

"Sit down, my child! Miss Brandon meant no offence to our gentle blood. You are an O'Rourke, and my first cousin and honored guest."

Bertha sat perfectly still, with shocked face, and Sonsie had turned her back upon them all, and reached the door, with her head up, stepping briskly, when Otho sprang forward, and caught her hand.

"Do not permit that girl to triumph over you, Sonsie,"

said he, with kind authority. "Come to the table instantly, and behave as if she were not there. You must, or you will most seriously hurt and offend Mr. Craigenfels, and slight us all, besides doing an injustice to yourself."

"They say bad news travels wid hare's feet, Mr. Groenveldt. I've a couple of minds to speak out what I know of that young lady and her doings. How long do you suppose Mr. Craigenfels 'd sit beaming so kindly, if I did? Look at her, pulling them flowers into smithereens, and fixin' up her lips as mournful as dirges!"

"I wouldn't interfere, if I were you," replied the doctor, with a queer smile. "Wait a little. There is not an error but sheathes its retribution. Come directly, without making a fuss."

"Very well, sir; since you say I ought, I will," she replied, readily, and she sat down by Chris, and ate her breakfast with as healthy appetite as though Belle's words had been a kindly morning salutation. That young person's strategy had proved a signal failure, and she had *not* got rid of Sonsie at a blow, as she intended; and she lifted swimming eyes to her host's face, in beautiful, bewildered terror.

"Now it is evident that I have made a sad blunder. I meant to pay a compliment, a merited one, too. Believe me, I did not know; I had no idea. Shall I go down on my knees to everybody, Sonsie Eagan included? Do forgive me, everybody. I have to have smiles and petting, to be comfortable Oh dear!"

"Give me some coffee, *mea Tortolita preciosa*," said Uncle Alec, cheerfully, "and let us get on with our breakfast. There's no harm done, and what shall be the order of our day?"

But all his kindly efforts could not bring gaiety to the surface again, and the breakfast passed very nearly in silence. When

it was finished, Sonsie went, with her head up, to Del, and got a basket of corn, and walked briskly down to the poultry-yard, intending to get rid of her stormy thoughts among the chickens. She had a couple of the yellow balls in her lap, and was beginning to look merry, and feel good-humored, when Belle Brandon called her by name.

"I've taken some trouble to come down to you, my good girl, and I come in kindness, because I cannot bear to see you put yourself in a way to be snubbed. You are too bright and sensible, and I hate to have you get your feelings trodden upon, as you did this morning. These gentles folks will toss you away, when they get weary of you, as they would an old shoe. I would keep to my station, if I were you. You see, I, innocent as I am, was led by your false position into a perfectly natural speech, which proved disagreeable, all because *you* was out of place."

"Niver trouble yourself about me at all, Miss Brandon," said Sonsie, putting back her chickens carefully, and standing up to toss out her corn among the fowls, who gathered around her; "I am quite able to have care of meself, and take me own part. I like being lectured by some, but I've got to feel a deep respect for people to have advice from them, and I'm afraid the likes of you couldn't do me any good. There's Miss Chris, now, or Mrs. Vedder, or Mr. Jan (Sonsie's eyes twinkled), or Miss Bradshaw — sure I could sit at their feet days and days, and drink up all their words, as you cock gobbles his corn, but you! — ah, ya, wisha!"

The gesture and accent of supreme disgust with which Sonsie finished her sentence irritated Belle beyond degree.

"You have no business here! I'll see if you cannot be made to understand it! and I'll have you sent back to your work. Set beggars on horseback?"

"Sure ye niver spake a truer word than that same, as ye yersel give example," answered Sonsie, showing her teeth provokingly, and smiling out of half-shut eyes. "Can't ye see I'm quite busy at me task now, sure, feeding Deborah's chickens? You best stand aside, or you'll happen get a spatter or so on yer bonnie gown, or the toe of yer slipper, along of that old hin scratchin'."

"Your impudence shall not save you. I should suppose you'd be too proud to stay where you're not wanted — where *I* do not want you," said Belle, haughtily.

"And is it you that say them words to me, Belle Brandon! you, to me!" said Sonsie, setting down her basket, and dusting her hands as she took a step toward the blonde; "I niver in the world meddled wid what concerns me not, but if ye put yer handsome body in me way, I'll walk over you, as sure as me name's O'Rouke! and where'd ye be hiding yer wicked blue eyes, and all them long curls, do ye think, if I was to tell Mr. Craigenfels the half of what I know of your doings. He's a true gentleman, and he would despise such tricks and lies as yours. I'd kape a civil tongue in my head, if I was you, and be aisy."

Belle's eyes glittered, and she turned on her heel. "Perhaps I had better go and ask Mr. Craigenfels to send and fetch up your brother the boot-black, and your sister the swil-girt, and we might make room for your mother the scavenger. ~~well~~ one must draw the line somewhere."

CHAPTER XXXI.

PIGEON DISPORTS HIMSELF AT WATCH HILL.

JOHAN NICKSON was absent on banking business ; so the deacon said, and he honestly believed it. If banking consists in throwing dice, from twelve o'clock at night till six in the morning, in gambling saloons, going to theatres, dance-houses, races, and the like, he was banking to a tremendous extent, with aid from his crony, Knox.

Mrs. Nickson was ill. Dr. Jenkins feared she was going into a decline, and said she must have change of air ; he would have prescribed a course of Sonsie Eagan, only that bright-eyed lassie was not to be had for calling, being absent at this time with the party in New York, as Zoe's maid. Poor Mary Ann was nervous, started with every sound ; a sudden footstep in the hall or a ring at the door-bell would take her breath away. She was hot and cold, restless, and much given to tears. The family doctor, who attended her closely, said Watch Hill was the place, and Sonsie the companion. As she was not to be had, Mrs. Nickson declared she would gladly go, if he would persuade Ruth Blair to come along, and she was quite eager to be off, thinking how much good she could do the small matron, whose pale, still face was a constant reproach to her.

Ruth did not know how to entertain the idea of abandoning the Horseshoe. George might come ! This, though an ever-present possibility to *her* mind, would have sounded so idle to others, that she never spoke the hope, but gave her school as a hindrance to the trip. Dr. Jenkins set before her the duties devolving upon her : first, to the poor, weak sufferer, Mary

Ann ; next to her boy. Such a pleasure to him ; what sea shells he could gather ; what pebbles ; and, lastly, to herself. He made her look at her face in the mirror, and bade her accept this golden opportunity to persuade back her roses and establish her health more firmly. "Let him see what a pretty mother he has got, and it will not be many years, my dear Ruth, before your boy will begin to compare your face with other faces. Don't let it fade through any wilfulness or neglect."

Ruth consented, and while she gazed at herself, she wondered if George would find her changed when he came home.

So she turned her back on the Horseshoe, leaving her heart behind her, and in March she and Mary Ann were domiciliated in the spot where the winds work their free will, and the waves dash forever and forever on the sounding shore.

The three were sole occupants of the Plimpton House, so gay in summer with lively guests and sea-side frolics. The early spring and cheerful sunshine invited them abroad, and Mrs. Nickson somewhat enjoyed sitting in sheltered places and listening to the dashing billows, watching the white gulls, and seeing Pigeon jump about, shouting his delight with the foam-caps, and Ruth gathering shells and mosses. But the poor, weak girl had few smiles. "She was sad at heart, and hadn't a word to say."

CHAPTER XXXII.

"ARE THEY DEAD? — PEOPLE DO DIE."

 HE eleven o'clock train was in, and George Blair stepped out upon the platform of the Millville depot, his bag strapped across his back, a box in his hand, and set off at a good pace, treading squarely and firm, head up, chest out, into the starlit night. He had studied the faces of the new passengers who got in at Toptown, and listened to their talk, hoping to learn something of Ruthie ; but they were all strangers, and prated of irrelevant matters. He crossed Peddler's bridge, and remembered his walk with Belle Brandon, in her pilgrim hat and staff; and then his thoughts flew by quick transition to Ruthie, as he had found her that night on his return, fast asleep, with wet lashes and crimson cheeks, and he involuntarily tightened his clasp of the box he carried, and quickened his pace.

The Horseshoe was all dark ; not a glimmer ; but then other houses were dark also ; that was to be expected at this late hour. He trod softly upon the porch, and knocked at the door, and tried the latch. It was fast, of course. Ruthie was a careful little housekeeper. He had gone through that door with her on his arm not three years ago, a joyous, blooming bride, and welcomed her to his home. No sound. He listened, and went on tiptoe to her window among the lilacs and roses. He trod down the crocus and tulips she loved, and tapped upon the glass, and called her name. No answer. He began to be chilly and pale. What could it mean? A great shaggy dog sprang out upon him, growling and threatening. "Ah, Flirt, good dog ! where is she?" Flirt lay down at his

feet and whined. Are they gone? Are they dead? People *do* die? There had been a coffin on the train; he had shuddered to pass it, strong man as he was, and his flesh crept as he remembered it, and tales of men coming home just too late. He might be one of those men. Why not? He deserved it.

Flirt was very uneasy, and wished to entice him to enter the deserted house. He took out his jack-knife, and quickly cut away the string from the sash. He knew precisely where to work, because it was one of his own setting, and in a few moments he stood within the room, which was still as death. He took a match from his pocket, and lighted the gas. The white bed was perfect; the work-table, the crimson basket, the toilette, the bracket—he had helped to arrange them all—most of them were the work of his fingers—every thing looked in dainty order. He listened for the solid tick of the great clock in the other room, but it was still, and he opened the door and stepped in. His desk was open. It seemed as he had left it an hour ago. The tiny cogs and wheels, his books, and even some half-finished toys, lay scattered upon the black velvet; and a letter! He left a letter there, in that very spot, when he deserted his true, good wife. Was this the same? He lifted it, and read his own name, "George Blair," in tiny characters—Ruth's writing—he kissed them, and tore it open.

DEAR GEORGE, — I had to go; I could not help it. If you should come in my absence—and I feel almost sure you will—and if you wish to see me, I am at Watch Hill. Pigeon is well. Much love. Your "Ruthie."

He examined the date—a week ago. He put it in his pocket, above a picture he always carried there. Flirt was whining piteously at the door; he admitted her, and returned

her caress with a good hug. Flirt had seen Ruth only one week before, and he told her she should see her again. Oh yes, very soon. Before he slept he looked over the box of toys, which were marked Pigeon, the silver engine made from a Mexican dollar, dusted and set out the work-box of Campeachy wood, with the unfinished R, and touched and examined all the furniture, and wound the old clock, and looked in the parlor; when he saw the desks he knew how Ruth had occupied herself during his absence. Dear, dear Ruthie.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

EXPLAINS WHY MRS. BLAIR DID NOT GET HER BATH.

SHE made up her mind to have an ocean bath. Mr. Plimpton said the water was cold as ice, and she would catch her death.

Ruth pooh-poohed that statement. "Ducks don't find their death in the yeasty brine," said she; and when the gentleman stared, she smiled. He did not know who was used to call her "duck."

Mary Ann shivered at the thought of such a plunge; so Ruth wrapped her in a warm shawl, and put her in a cleft of the rock, where the sun beat down, and left her with Pigeon to amuse her.

Ruthie had donned her crimson bathing-dress, of warm cloth, and her patient said she looked like little Red Ridinghood going to see her grandmother, and hoped she wouldn't meet any wicked wolf. "You're proper pretty, Ruthie," she added, as she hung the little basket on her friend's arm, "proper pretty isn't she, Pigeon?"

Pigeon declined giving an opinion, but promulgated a statement concerning "precious papa," which got him an unlimited number of kisses. The small matron's crimson shawl was knotted about her, and she was busily stooping among the rocks, hunting her algæ, and added some lovely scarlet specimens to her collection. She felt particularly gay. Whether it was the bracing air, or her absence from familiar scenes, which were all written over with her sorrow, I cannot tell; but she was *sure* George would come home. She was thinking about him as she walked up and down. *That* was nothing unusual; for her handsome giant was always the sub-thought in her mind, no matter what troubled its surface. She found her shawl heavy, the sun was so hot, and she threw it off, and sat down on the warm sands, and took off her stockings and shoes, preparatory to her plunge, and while she tempted the waves with her little foot, round and smooth, and the color of a pink sea-shell, she pondered what she would get for supper, what she would wear on the gala night when George *had* come. She rose, and looked enjoyingly around her at the sky and the sea, and all the while she trolled snatches of her cradle song, —

"The cricket sings under the hearth —
The bird is asleep on the tree ;"

and then she fell to indenting small impressions of her foot in the yielding sand, and once she fancied she caught her simple refrain echoed back in her husband's voice, and she smiled to think how her intense longing could almost cheat her ears. A saucy billow flirted up and kissed her toes, and she sprang back in haste, it was so cold. "Ugh! tis chilly!" said she; "but a duck who has jumped into freezing water all winter need not be frightened at it. I'll have my bath, anyhow. Now then!" — she swung her arms, as children do, who propose to leap

from the big beam on to the hay mow, — “one to begin, two to show, three to make ready, four to go!”

But Ruth did not “go;” a pair of great, strong, loving arms caught her, and held her fast, and the “darling bud of a woman” just fluttered to her husband’s faithful heart with one sob of joy, and was gathered home.

The glad sea waves came rolling in, hurrying, and leaping each other’s shoulders, to get a sight of her in her crimson garments, and the wind-voices piped tunefully above them, and the white gulls wheeled and screamed and flew out over the green water, to carry the news to their friends, who were riding the froth-caps, and the human souls drank in the bliss which is brought by absence.

Ruth was the first to speak. What she said was nothing original or thrilling, but her husband liked it. It would have done you good to get a look at his face, while he gazed at her uplifted one.

“Oh, George! how lucky that you came that very instant! I was just going to plunge, and I should have been as wet as a mermaid, and then I couldn’t have got this good old-fashioned hug, could I? George, George! are you sure it is you? really and truly? no dream? I have had so many such, where I saw your eyes looking just as they do now, and then I have wakened to find myself alone — that was too pitiful!”

Ruth’s eyes began to fill, and George made haste to reassure her.

“This is no dream, duck,” giving her a fresh hug, “nor this; you couldn’t dream such kisses as these, could you?”

They were both silent a while, scarcely thinking, only conscious of happiness; then George said, “Before God, who sees us, duck, I meant to do right. I was always a clumsy

fellow, and I blundered horribly ; but I didn't know what a fool I was till a few weeks ago — a stupid, blind fool."

As George went on talking, Ruth's thoughts flew over the past. She saw that he had no idea she had ever coupled Belle Brandon with him in jealous folly, and she considered, with the lightning quickness women are capable of, whether she should tell him, and she decided — little Jesuit that she was — "No, I will not so humble myself, nor shame him. It is my own secret, and I will bury it out of sight. I have suffered enough." Was she right? The giant's story was told, she knew all about his day in the Romanza and Otho's deliverance, and she tightened her clasp of his hand as the scene rose vividly before her. George struggling with death ! and she thanked the merciful Christ, who had restored him to her love.

"Have you forgiven me?" said she. "Am I honest and true and loyal? No spot, no flaw? Are you sure that I never in my life loved any man but you?"

"Duck, don't make me blush — a great fellow like me ! Come, let's begin anew. Only, if ever Belle Brandon comes in my way !"

"Well, George!" said Ruth, fluttering a little, "what would you do?"

"I'd — I'd" — the giant clenched his fists — then loosing them with a bright smile, he finished, "I'd think what a fool she made of me !"

Ruth hid her face. "Even so," she thought ; "and I also will have to think what a fool she made of me." She took from her bosom a worn paper, and kissed it, tore it into fragments, and scattered them upon the waves at their feet.

"That was your last letter to me, George," said she. "I did not like the tone of it, and so you see I have confided it to

the care of the fishes. You must not write me any more such letters — will you?"

"Never, dearest! I'll never write you another, if Heaven is kind to me, for I mean always to keep you close to me."

A sweet childish voice rung out clear on the rocks above them, "Mamma, mamma!"

"Ah! my darling Pigeon," said George, and the two made haste to seek him.

"Look, baby, look!" exclaimed Ruth; "look who is coming!"

"Precious papa!" said the boy, reaching out his hands.

"Ah! you did not forget me."

Mary Ann saw them climbing up, the child mounted on his old favorite perch, and throwing kisses from the giant's shoulder. She clasped her thin hands, and burst into tears. "Oh, my God! I thank thee that I have lived to see this good sight! Now I feel that my sin is forgiven."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

CHRIS HAS A CHANCE OF BECOMING A SPINNER.

AS may be supposed, our Chris passed a sleepless night in the Tower-room at Craigenfels after her mother's cordial welcome home, and she made up her mind to do her duty. So she slipped out of a side door as soon as she could go unobserved, and found Thomas busy among his peach trees.

"Dear Thomas, may I ride Zephyr a little this morning?"

"Certainly, Miss Chrissie; I'll have him groomed and sad."

dled directly." She followed him down to the loose box where the pretty creature was looking out for them. "Here you, Tommy! step lively, and bring out Zephyr for this young lady."

"Don't speak loud, Thomas, please, because I don't want *them* to know. I'll just mount here, in the yard, and have a quiet canter all by myself. The people up yonder won't miss me."

She was turning out of the gate, when Otho Groenveldt came in behind the old grapery, and stood gazing after her in displeased astonishment. Zephyr pranced and arched his little head, and pointed his fine ears, and uttered short snorts, rejoicing in his expected race, and delighted with his rider, whose hands and face and dress he had examined with his discriminating nose, and his bright, intelligent eyes before permitting her to mount.

"Where is Miss Goldsmith going alone, Thomas?"

"Just for a wee canter, sir. She came down and asked me for Zephyr, as sweet as any thing. You know he is an o' l pet of hers. I don't think there can be any risk, sir," he added, rather doubtfully, as he noticed the young doctor's anxious face. "She's a good rider, and Zephyr respects her."

"Have Tramp saddled immediately!" ordered Otho shortly. "You have done very wrong to permit this."

"I can't refuse any thing to that pretty creature, sir," answered the old man, with his hands spread apologetically. "If she should ask me to take out my heart and give it her, I'd not lose an instant till I'd put it at her feet, she's that winsome."

Otho threw a curious look at the servant, with a half smile behind it, and springing upon Black Tramp, he trotted out of the yard.

Chris dismounted at Brookside, and tossed the bridle over

the post, and walked up the avenue, and called as she went for Rainbow. She hardly expected to find him, because she had gotten a full account of his tricks and his manners during her absence, from Sonsie, but still she felt a little more down-hearted than before, because he did not appear. She stepped upon the door-stone, where Otho had taken leave of her after her wonderful day up at Craigenfels, when he had asked if he might come and see her. She turned the handle — it was fast — so she knocked ; no one came ; she knocked again ; the upper window lifted, and the grim widow stuck out her head, enwrapped in an old red handkerchief.

“What d’ye want, poundin’ down there?” asked she.

“To come in, mother, and see you,” replied Chris, humbly.

“What! they got tired on ye so quick up there? I thought ‘twouldn’t last long; such hifaluten talkin’ never amounts to shucks. That old man, that’s always running, like a fool’s eyes, to the ends of the earth, he’s wiser in his own conceit than seven men who can render a reason. — Proverbs xxvi. 16.”

“May I come in, mother?”

“Come in! Do you suppose I’m going to leave my work, and keep prancing up and down stairs all the while, to wait on *you*, just when you take a notion? If you do, your drefful mistaken, that’s all. I’ve got the heft of my sweepin’ to do; *I’m* amost worked to death, and *you* travellin’ round spendin’ money! I shan’t be down this half hour!”

“Oh, mother! please don’t talk so to me. Let me come in.” Chris burst into tears.

“You are a wicked, rebellious, wasteful child! As vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes. — Proverbs x. 26.” (It was a never-ending subject of wonder to me, in my acquaintance with Mrs. Goldsmith, where she managed to light upon so many scathing texts.)

"Oh, mother, mother! do not say that. I am not wicked I could not help going to Craigenfels last night. Uncle Alec took me by his will, and I have come back as soon as I could, to ask you to forgive me, and let me come home. Please, mother, don't look so cross. I should think you might give me one pleasant word, when I've been gone so long."

"Oh, yes! Did I want you to go and use up my money? You've found out all, that are man's fine talkin' don't amount to shucks, and now you're mighty glad to try and curry favor with me. Awful crank he was, to be sure. I'll come down and open my door, and let you into this house, where you want never no use, on one condition—you'll go right to work and make an end on't. No more whinin' about school, and books, and such wasteful idlin'. See if you can begin to earn your salt. 'Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee.' — Jeremiah ii. 10."

"What! give up Rosenbloom, where I have earned my scholarship by hard study? I don't think I ought to do that, mother. I cost you nothing for tuition."

"You don't! What do you call a great long bill I got 'tother day, for close? Mighty fine doings, these. I've been lookin' at the duds this morning—the ribbons and slippers and gloves. Who told you to get all sorts of finery, for me to pay for? I've took and put 'em all away up garret, and there they'll stay one while."

"Will you not let me have my clothes?" asked Chris, in a fright? "Please don't say so. I couldn't go back to the cinder-wench I was. I've been very careful. I got nothing but what was proper for my father's daughter. You cannot wish me to disgrace poor papa's memory. Oh, do let me have them!"

"Not a rag! till you've airnt 'em. You shall go down on

your knees on that ere stun, and eat husks, like the Prodigal Son !”

Chris glanced up at the widow, shaking her fist and glowering. She was not an angel, though Sonsie was accustomed to consider her such, and she lost her temper.

“Will you open the door and admit me to my own home, where I have a right to be, or shall I go away, and never come back?”

“Go away! where to, pray? out to the poor-house? You’ve allers been talkin’ about teachin’ school. Why don’t you go and do it? I don’t want to support you no longer. I ain’t goin’ to be mealy-mouthed nothin’ at all about it. Beg my parding, and promise to go to work stiddy, or you shan’t darken my door.”

“You turn me out, then! except upon the condition of being your drudge? I don’t think I ought to accept such terms. I’ll go. I can earn my living, I think. At any rate, I can try, and may God forgive you for your treatment of me. Just wait till Chandy comes home! he’ll make you be kind, and, mother, when you get to heaven and don’t find me there, you may know that it is because you made your religion so hateful to me! Good-by. If you are sick — if you need a daughter’s care, I’ll try to be good, and forgive you, and I’ll be kind and tender if you will let me.”

The widow banged down the sash. Her only daughter’s words affected her strangely. “If you should be sick.” She looked down at her wrinkled old hands. They had never struck her so before, but, of a truth, she could remember them full of dimples and rosy-tinted. “If you should be sick.” She was getting old, certainly, and a vision of a lonely room, a helpless, withered creature, stretched there to die, and no child-love about her. Christabel could be very gentle in a sick

room ; she had nursed her through a fever once, and was tender and helpful. She mused. "Chandy ; he would not have anybody else around him — wouldn't have *me* !" She rose up. "No ! I'll let her go ! What a fool I was to think for an instant of calling her back ! Sick ! me ! fiddlesticks. I'm as tough as a knot, and she's got to come to it. That old gopher isn't goin' to board and clothe her. I ain't such a flat as to think it, if she does ; and when she's humble enough, I'll make her do the spinning."

CHAPTER XXXV.

CHRIS TREATS RAINBOW TO A RIDE UPON ZEPHYR.

HRIS rode off in such a tumult of emotions, that she hardly knew where she was, and let Zephyr gallop as swiftly as he chose. She hadn't expected much demonstration of affection, and yet the scene she had just finished was hard to bear. She bitterly reproached herself for her hasty, undutiful words, and wished she had bitten her tongue and kept it still, and when Zephyr dropped into a walk, she thought deeply. Was it her duty to take up her old life again ? "No !" she said firmly, "it is not. I have a right to something better, and I am resolved to have it. I will finish at Rosenbloom. I can manage it somehow, and I will. One year is mine already."

Zephyr heard a clatter of hoofs behind him, and picked up his little round sabots in a hurry. He had no idea of being passed by horse-feet, and he fleetly flew, like a winged wind. His pursuer was distanced, and when Chris looked around, there was no one in sight.

"Oh," said she, "he must have turned the corner, or taken that wood-path. Well, Zephyr, you have a clear road now. Let us go where you carried me that day."

So they went over Hog's-back, through the meadow-road, where Dulcet struggled with the cow-ponys, up the glen, pausing at the well-remembered places. She dismounted, twice or thrice, to gather pale blossoms, when the gentle steed followed her like a dog, coaxing for a taste of her wood-flowers. While she stood playing with him, pushing off the inquisitive nose he was determined to thrust among her sweets, she heard a scramble and a loved "purnow," and Rainbow came tearing through the bushes, and leaped upon her, overwhelmed with joy. She sat down on the grass and gathered him in her arms, and had a good cry, and she felt better.

"Now I'll give you a little ride, my dear cat," said she, inviting him to a place upon her horse, which he readily took, and lay with his fore-paws dangling among Zephyr's beauty-locks, while he looked out complacently over his head.

Chris laughed heartily, and the steed seemed to like it too, and stood quite still, or walked carefully, not to disturb his new friend. They rambled on through the sweet-smelling woods, just bursting into leaf, and when Chris was tired and ready to mount, she took Rainbow in her arms, and poured out her sorrows to him, as she used in the old days, when he was the treasure-house of her secrets, and she got a little comfort out of his purring society. They neared the gate; and she turned her head, and looked and listened.

"I think it must be the headless horseman, who used to vanish when people sought him," said she, "for I feel certain I heard hoofs behind us. Say, Zephyr, do you remember how you and I leaped those bars? Could we do it again? You and I and Rainbow!"

Zephyr arched his neck to her caress, and said "yes," as plain as horse could, and Chris pulled the Egyptian close up to her, tightened the reins, and brightly, softly, airily, easily, over they flew, and landed in safety. The maid forgot her sorrow, and her eyes danced, and the gray rocks threw back her joyous laughter. She heard a shout, and swift hoofs behind her, and turned her head just in time to see Otho Groenveldt following her lead, and in another moment he reined in Black Tramp at her side.

"So it was you, sir, who have been dodging in and out behind me, putting Zephyr into a foam, till I shall get scolded by Thomas for hard riding," said Chris, frowning.

The young doctor looked much amused at the unexpected salutation.

"Yes, Miss Chris. It is I. When a young lady is foolhardy enough to start off alone on a gay horse, who has not been out of his stall for a week, I think she needs somebody to look after her. You are certainly fortunate to come home with your head where it belongs."

Chris laughed scornfully.

"I should get a scone for my head, and ensconce it too, or else seek my wit in my shoulders, when I come to grief through Zephyr's treachery. I am a firm believer in the chivalry of horses. Good-by, Rainbow. Thank Zephyr for your ride," she added as the Egyptian leaped to the ground and trotted on before them.

"That is a wonderful cat of yours, Miss Chris," remarked Otho, looking interested.

"Yes, sir; I intend to change his name from Rainbow to everlasting steadfastness, because he is always the same—a firm, true friend."

"What if I were to remind you of an old contract of ours,

Miss Goldsmith," said Otho, slowly ; "an unredeemed guerdon, a race to flush the cheek and quicken the pulse. Shall we, some fine day, pick up our merry contest, and take the ride, and a leap also, if you like? I see you have not lost your skill."

Chris's lip quivered.

"I was glad that day," said she ; "I felt so strong, so young, so sure of God. To-day it is different. I can take up no old promises."

He threw himself from his horse, and stood with outstretched arms, waiting for her to dismount ; but she pushed Zephyr past him, and leaped lightly to the ground, and after a kiss upon his glossy face and a farewell pat, she walked straight up to the house. She found Uncle Alec in the library, and she laid her hand upon his shoulder.

"I've got no friend but you now ; no home but this. 'I'm a pilgrim and a stranger ; I tarry but a night.'"

She tried hard not to weep, while she uttered Deacon Williams' favorite couplet, and she told her story, not omitting the hard words she had thrown back for her mother's goading.

"I know that was wrong. I'm sorry for it. But, Uncle Alec, did I do right?"

"Yes, pet," very decidedly.

"But I must have my clothes, you dear uncle. Eve's daughter must get her beloved finery. Ask Miss Brandon if that is not a correct statement."

Chris curled her lip, as the blonde appeared in the door-way, with her hands full of cut-flowers, and did her best to speak lightly.

"I'll take care of all such necessities, my child ; give yourself no worry," said Uncle Alec, kindly. "Just begin now to

enjoy yourself thoroughly, and make me happy. Little pet, darling queenie, shall have every thing she likes."

"I fear I may be *de trop*. Shall I withdraw," asked Belle, smiling.

"Not at all, my dear," replied the old fellow, beaming on her; "come in, pray, pretty Flora, *Tortolita preciosa*."

Chris, preoccupied as she was, observed the tenderness into which the soft Spanish melted in his tones, and also noted that his eyes followed the beauty's graceful motions with peculiar pleasure.

"Do you like blue and scarlet, Mr. Craigenfels?" asked Belle, walking close up to her host. Her rapid step showed her tiny blue satin slipper, and her floating soft hair, dressed with fuschias, drifted back from her creamy face, and pendant from his turquoise brooch there hung a cluster of the eardrops, and her azure crape trailed after her in sweeping folds.

"I had infinite trouble to coax your gardener, but I made him kind at last, and he gave me these for you and Mr. Groenveldt. You see, I am not the selfish girl who forgets her friends—rosemary, and rue, and pansies. You may divide them between you. Ah, here comes your cavalier. I saw you riding in together. There! don't blush. Mr. Craigenfels, we must be sharp with these young people. We do not approve of their stealing off through by-ways slyly, do we? You must also wear the willow, Mr. Groenveldt, I fear, along with your rue.' She took up Chris's wrist, and flashed the sapphires before his eyes. "I have found out all about this gorgeous thing -- a perfect chapter of romance. Love at first sight, constancy, separation, and plighted vows, and by-and-by a wedding. May we all be there to see the happy pair!"

"What impertinent nonsense you are talking!" said Chris, jerking away her arm, and pulling down her sleeve over the gems.

Belle laughed merrily. "Max is such a pretty name," exclaimed she.

Otho bowed pleasantly to the blonde. "Young ladies, thoughts are much given to matrimony, I suppose ; so it is not strange that Miss Brandon should prate of it so *parlous* sweet, and, apropos, I have a letter from your adored, which I took from the post but now, *H. X. Z.* Zambrano has a choice monogram, indeed."

Belle reddened, and reached out quickly to take the epistle, which Uncle Alec could not help seeing.

"It appears that my friend Dolores likes it, since she is so fond of using it. This is one of her crossed and recrossed epistles, all about the balls and concerts and beaux, I suppose. As for me, I am so thoroughly happy here, that I have forgotten my town-life. I wish everybody would leave me alone."

"Her penmanship is something masculine, is it not," asked Otho, incredulously.

"I am not aware that it is of the least consequence to you, Mr. Groenveldt," replied Belle, a little crossly. "However, I assure you she writes in the precise style taught at Rosenbloom."

"That is not Dolores' writing," remarked Chris, quietly.

"It is," said Belle.

"It is *not*," answered Chris, walking off into the drawing-room, where Otho followed her.

"Politeness is a quality which highly adorns a woman. *Vous êtes très polie, chérie*," said Belle, airily, as she thrust the missive into her pocket.

"But how about that handsome young Cuban, *mea preciosa*," asked Uncle Alec, kindly. "Is he to be the happy individual?"

"That *boy* !" exclaimed Belle. "Oh no, sir ! Please don't *you* jest with me ? I cannot bear it. I don't mind Mr

Groenveldt and our Chris, because they know I could *never* fancy such an unformed, immature person."

"Why not, my dear? He is a mighty good-looking chap."

Belle picked out her flowers, and laid them up together, the scarlet and the blue, with her head on one side admiringly. Of course she did not know that her host was watching her.

"Perhaps he may, but you see I don't like him; that's all. When I marry, I mean to have a husband who has dignity and responsibility and position."

"Better be careful how you correspond much with him, then. Those hot-headed Spaniards are hard to manage, and pretty soon he'll be writing love to you, and it were a pity you should break his heart."

"Me, sir! I break no hearts; I correspond with no lovers. You don't know me yet; and as for love, I had not found out what it meant till I came" — she blushed, and dropped her eyes upon the toe of her slipper, and then lifted them slowly till they reached his, when they were swimming in modest confusion.

"Do let me sing to you," said she, tossing away her flowers in a pretty hurry, after a pause, during which she had been punishing the poor blossoms dreadfully — tearing them, as Sonsie would have said, into smithereens — and manœuvring her lips and her dimples. Her voice was at its richest, and she was gushing, ardent, coaxing, childish, delightful. She and her host were *tête-à-tête* till dinner, and the genial gentleman passed a most agreeable morning. Belle Brandon had a little worry to keep under too, so that when she got to her room to dress, and pulled out and read her crumpled letter, she threw herself wearily down upon her bed, with drooping arms.

"Oh dear," said she, "I only hope *le jeu en vaut la chandelle*. That tiresome Zambrano! I must answer him by this mail. He begins to threaten. I wonder how much money he

really has ! But, in any case, a life here [she looked about her], with a town-house, and unlimited command of this rich man's purse. He throws his money about shamefully." She drew from her pocket a handful of Mexican dollars, probably as confirmation of her statement. "An old man's darling better than a young man's slave. Any common girl would have a fair chance to be that as Zambrano's wife, with his stupid jealousies and flashing looks. I cannot afford to throw him over though, till I am sure, for married I must and will be, and married rich. I can't stand Aunt Isadore forever."

She sat down before her mirror, and studied her blue orbs and creamy face for inspiration, and then she indited a tender epistle, full of pet names and endearments, which she signed "Your own loving Belle," and directed to "Henriquez Zambrano."

"There ! I hope that will keep the fool quiet a while, till I can see where I am ;" and as she brushed out her curls, the threaded notes of her musical laughter rippled forth so clear, that Deb stopped outside her door to listen and frown, and Rainbow rose from his place on the rug, and walked into the fresh air, which he snuffed uneasily.

Indeed, Deb was not nearly so well pleased with Mr. Craigenfels' morning as was that gentleman himself. She came and went several times past the drawing-room *porte*, and she scowled, rather, upon the lovely blonde.

"Well, well," remarked she, testily, "There's no fool like an old fool ! Who'd a thought, now, that a sensible man, like our good master, would ha' been so took up with that bit of red and white flesh, with a selfish devil inside ont. But bless your soul, men are all alike ; just butter 'em a little, and they'll swallow down flattery as Bose bolts his dinner."

Otho followed Chris into a little morning-room, which was mostly bow-window, and sat down by her.

"Miss Chris, I am glad you came into this odd, out-of-the-way nook. I like it extremely. I've got some charming news for you, which you will rejoice to hear, and this arm-chair will just suit me while I tell it."

It was the Mexican life, its perils and escapes, and included such praises of George Blair, in such terms that Chris was astonished, and when she learned that the giant was returned, and Ruth was happy, her eyes kindled with glad brightness, and her face unlocked, and she readily complied with his request to try a little the violin, and he produced a real cremona and praised her execution, and then they talked and read, and dinner found them still absorbed in their pleasure, and when she ran off to dress, Chris had to tell herself that she had been happy.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

SONSIE AND JAN VISIT THE CHILDREN.

AFTER Belle Brandon's parting shot among the chicken-coops, Sonsie Eagan walked back to the house, with her empty basket on her arm, and sat down in Deb's kitchen.

"I think I'll get a little step this morning, Mistress Deborah," said she. "I'm worritin over Miss Ruthie. She should be at home, I am sure, by this, and I long for a sight of her true face; and if I do not return, please tell Mr. Craigenfels that I left my respectful duty for him."

She met Belle on the stairs, as she came down in her hat and cloak.

"Ah, my good girl, I perceive you are about to take my advice. That is right. Get a suitable, respectable service, and you may come to me any time for reference."

"I'll come to ye for other than that one day, I'm thinkin'," said Sonsie.

She was walking briskly through the upper glen, with her head up, which she tossed a little sometimes, as if she were getting the better of an adversary in her busy thoughts, when Zephyr came close upon her before she saw him, or heard his light hoofs on the springing turf.

"Why, Miss Chris, dear [this was the same morning on which Chris paid her visit of filial duty to Brookside, you know, and she was returning from the same], why, Miss Chris, don't ye ride over a poor walkin' body, wid yer pretty horse. Sure ye look winsome, the pair of ye, and this is a bonnie green place for our meeting."

Chris drew rein, and the two young faces, both clouded before with unwelcome thoughts, cleared, and rippled all over with smiles.

"I saw ye, mavourneen, though ye stole off so sly, and right glad am I that ye got yer dainty Zephyr so brave and early; for there's a Kilpie after him. But whisper, darlin' ladykin, where's the cheerness that should light yer precious face?"

Chris was just in the humor for unlocking her trouble, and she let it all out to the faithful soul, so good to rest upon.

"And what am I to do, Sonsie?" she finished; "no clothes, and no money! Was ever a poor girl so tried?"

The Celtic lassie heard her in swelling wrath. "I'll go down and break open the place wid me two fists, and bring away yer things mesel'! ivery rag! Bad luck to the murtherin' old—"

Though Sonsie had all the Irish reverence for parental

authority, she forgot it in her hot indignation over her white angel's trouble, and was going on to intensify the occasion, when Chris stopped her.

"No, no, Sonsie; hush! I must not let you talk so. I feel very unhappy, and I know my behavior was not just perfection. I am afraid I rather spoke up; and I'm going to think it over quietly, and make up my mind. It is a serious thing for a young girl to cut loose from the mother. Oh, dear, I wish mine loved me! Good-by, Sonsie, my own Sonsie; give my dear love to Ruthie and Pigeon."

Sonsie watched her slender figure round the bend, and stood still a moment after she had gone out of sight, thinking, before she walked on.

"Ah, wisha! 'tis a wanderin' bird cast out of its nest that ye are, darlin'; 'thy lips are a thread of scarlet, and thy speech is comely.' She read them words to me this very mornin' herself, out of me new Bible, and mighty good readin' it is, for all Father O'Gorman forbiddin' it to us. Sure and faith, I've the common sense given me by our great Father in heaven, and I'll use it for guidance the best I'm able, before I give me soul up to be huded and hushed by ary priest at all. These Yankee girls are ladies and Christians, and their ministers tell them to search the Scriptures; and just listen to them talk! You can't puzzle them on the doctrines, and we poor Catholics haven't a word to say for our faith, through bein' kept in darkness. Ah! Miss Chris, darlin', how can I help ye? Augh! but yon old woman is a fiery dragon. She's a cockatrice, a — a — a — ivery one of them pisin things that St. Peter druv cut of the pleasant land. Yes, all of them intirely, bad luck to her! and she's a Protestant. Yes, this is just the truth for yez, Sonsie. It isn't the Protestants that's good, and 'tisin't the Catholics, but 'tis the Christians, — 'those who do the will of

my Father in heaven,' — Christ's own words ;" and, quite satisfied with her solution of the subject, Sonsie took a good think upon another, saying, "Whisper ; how'll I do it?"

Her head was bent, and her eyes seeking the ground, and her footsteps so slow that, when Jan Vedder espied her, he said to his mother, "Sonsie has lost something."

He was driving "the creams" up to Craigenfels in quest of this very lassie, and he stopped to speak to her.

"What is it, Ollam Folda? Not the green glass breast-pin that's gone, I hope."

Sonsie put her hand to her throat. "Sure, then, it is," said she, in alarm. "I wonder, now, did I wear me fairing to-day? I had it in me hand, anyhow."

"Jump in, and I'll drive straight up to Craigenfels and hunt it out."

"No, Mr. Jan, thankin' ye kindly ; I feel quite sure that it is safe. I do remember me now that it lies in its box on the table, on account of Miss Chris puttin' me the flower of a primrose to me throat in place of it. I can't return now. I'm bound to Miss Ruthie's, whom I wish much after me journey."

"That is a joy deferred, my dear child," said Mrs. Vedder. "Mrs. Blair is from home ; but I've got a letter for you. Come, get in by my side, and I will give it to you, and show you mine too ; for I also have a letter."

"And is it a lether, ma'am? Isn' that quare, now? I niver had a lether in the whole of me life. Let me take it in me hand, please, till I feel it."

"Come up first," persisted Mrs. Vedder.

The lassie looked in the fairy matron's face, and at the young fellow, who was waiting her decision anxiously.

"Sure, I'll not be stomachful toward these true gentlefolk,

because of the cruel words of yon nasty rascal. I'll clear me up bright, and speak fair. 'Truth, purity, delicacy, culture.' Those were my white angel's words. Yes, ma'am, *avec grand plaisir*. Miss Brandon's own words," said she, exactly reproducing Belle's accent.

Jan jumped down. "Sit by me, Sonsie. I want you most, and I'll let you drive the creams."

She hesitated.

"Yes, dear daughter; sit there; that is right. We women must indulge the lords of creation sometimes, in their silly whims," said Jan's mother.

Sonsie sprang up without another word. "Now give me the letter, till I read it," said she, reaching back her hand. She perused it attentively, folded, kissed, and hid it in her bosom.

"Well, my daughter, what does she say?" asked Mrs. Vedder, after giving her time to think a little.

"She says I'm to come wid ye, ma'am, and be a good girl while I stay, and do as ye bid me, and be loving and faithful," replied Sonsie, soberly.

"That is very nice of Mrs. Blair. She knew how much I needed you, because, you see, I have all my plants to pot, and my ferns to gather, and my musk ducks to rear, and my calves to wean. In short, I have my hands so full of work, that I don't know which to take up first. Our journey just cut into the important time, and I am afraid the star-flowers and wood-violets are all out of bloom. Oh, yes, Sonsie, you will be a treasure, indeed."

"I will gladly come, then, Mrs. Vedder, and thank ye truly for needing me. And sure yer face is just a gleam of sunshine this morning, when I had been feeling as if God had forgotten the world, along of lettin' every thing go so wrong."

She proceeded to detail Chris's story, and to give a very forcible opinion of the sour widow and her doings; and Jan took it up, and said no such proceedings as those would go down, and threw in stinging comments upon her excessive piety, and closed up by asserting that if *such* religion was going to take *such* people to heaven, he had no wish to go there.

"*Christians* are going to heaven," answered Sonsie, with the fixed assurance which her recent solution of the matter gave her. "They'll take their love, their goodness, and their truth, and their delicacy, and culture, along with them; and that's why it will be so pleasant to be among them. I don't believe purple blood will count there. Those are the people I like to live with, and I am going to try to go."

While Jan was studying her, and hoping she wouldn't be in a hurry to get off, a peddler passed them, in a covered cart.

"Just the fellow we need, Sonsie," he exclaimed, in an excited voice. He will do bravely. Hillo, Tim! where are you stopping to-night?"

"Deoun to Miss Larkum's," replied the peddler, nasally. "She's goin' to trade off her truck, and she's so darned slow, I don't expect to be threw before midnight, much."

"I'll be there by six o'clock," said Jan. "You wait for me. I've got important business, — something that you will find profitable."

"I'll stop, Mr. Vedder, never fear; that's just the sort of a cheese I like to cut," replied the peddler, laughing. "Come, git up, ye darned lazy cretter, or I'll swap ye off for soap grease. Git up!"

Jan developed a plan as they drove on, which afforded intense amusement to Sonsie, who extolled highly his inventive genius, and caused his mother to say, smilingly, what a giddy pair of young hopefuls they were, such a queer frolic; and to think

how gay and handsome a couple they'd make. They had a delightful drive, and Sonsie got a lesson in managing the "creams," and Jan hugely enjoyed watching her blue eyes and purposeful face, as she obeyed his directions.

"Let us go down to the Clayton mansion," said he, holding his head with both hands during the fast time. "Thank Heaven, my wig is all safe. Turn the next corner, Sonsie, — take care! don't go round on two wheels, — and we'll look in on our family. That poor little cripple haunts me. I shall never forget his look when he threw himself at my feet."

"Nor the hard blow he got for it, either," said Sonsie.

Captain Slocum was in the garden, in his shirt sleeves, directing his men, who were laying out flower-beds of every conceivable pattern, and he took off his straw hat and swung it round his head, as soon as he espied them.

"Well, papa Slocum, how are the children?" asked Jan, reaching down to shake hands.

"Seven golden candlesticks, seven rams, seven lambs, seven he-goats, seven bullocks," replied the captain. "You never saw such a group of young ones in your life. 'We are seven. We take our little porringers, and we eat our supper there,'" pointing over his shoulder with his thumb toward the house. "Come up and see us do it. I thought, for a couple of days, that we shouldn't be but six, but my wife, she set that up square with a young woman she found after diligent search. I mentioned a nanny-goat, but Dulcet turned up her nose. She has peculiar ideas on these subjects."

Mrs. Slocum sat in the midst of her new family, busy and important as a hen who has just brought off a large brood. The oldest girl was in her lap, getting her flaxen hair curled; and the pale cripple sat at her feet with a book of colored pictures, which he was sedately admiring, and his face lighted with

a heavenly smile when he saw Sonsie ; and he dropped the book and folded his hands as if he was going to pray. She stooped, and kissed his passive, uncomplaining eyes, and inquired how he liked his new home.

"It is lovely-sweet here !" said he. "She is so good !" He took Dulcet's stuff gown into his clasp, and pressed it to his heart. "I'm *so* happy ; and *they* eat and sleep ; they've forgotten all about the dreadful times. *I* can't ; I dream of them in my sleep at night, and think I feel the whip on my back ; and when I wake up in my good bed — all nice and warm — I'm *so* glad ! *so* glad !"

The other five were imbibing nourishment under the charge of a nice red-and-white young woman, who held the bit of a baby to her breast ; and old Mrs. Petibone, who, with a vast check apron begirding her trim figure, and her silver-bowed spectacles on her nose, was administering alternate doses of bread and milk among the mouths open to receive, like young robins in the nest. Dulcet explained.

"They experience perpetually the cravings of hunger yet, and we feed them every two hours all day long. Poor little innocents ! so scarred and marred as they were. It makes me sick to think about it !"

"I declare, Mr. Vedder," said the old lady, pushing off her glasses up above her cap-border, "I'm thankful enough that I got well. I kinder thought, last winter, about the time Bax Williams died, I was drefful sick then, you know ; and I used to tell the cappen, 'Cappen,' says I, 'I a'most think my work is all done, and I'm ready to go, if it is the Lord's will.' And the cappen used to larf at me, and say, 'Why, law, mother ! you'll live to trot a heap of grand-children on your knees yet. We can't think of sparin' you ;' and, bless you, here they are ! a heap on 'em, sure enough, all to once ! Yes, Mr. Vedder, I'm

glad I stayed to see 'em ; and they're gettin' chirk and fat every day."

"Really, Mr. Vølder, and you, Sonsie," said Dulcet, "mother is quite right ; she always is. We do not know how, appropriately, to thank you for finding us this blessed work to do. Although I am so puffically fastigious, I experience the greatest amount of pleasure and absorbing interest in these dear little waifs cast ashore upon the strands of time ! and it is delightful to contemplate upon our privilege of rescuing them from destruction, and restoring them to their divine Creator's approbation, and writing upon their precious immortal souls his image and superscription, if God spares our lives."

"Of course he will !" put in the captain. "He ain't going to knock us out of a job of his own providing. We'll fix up the seven lambs, seven rams, seven — law ! how that Scripture kinder hangs together, don't it. I mean the seven children, smarter than Jerusalem crickets. Oh, yes, Dulcet, my dear ! 'I shall die in my nest, and multiply my days as the sand. Just make that quotation plural, and it will fit you and me to a fraction."

"That is the captain's peculiarly forcible way of expressing himself," said Dulcet, fearing they might think her worthy husband irreverent, "though, I must say, I fully coincide with his views, and cheerfully co-operate with all his plans for our new-found treasures ; and I, myself, fully expect to remain in the sublunary sphere till they reach maturity."

"Just so, Vedder ; good feed and a warm stable, that brings up stock, don't it ? 'Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples.'"

The captain button-holed Jan, and pulled him into the new bay-window.

"There's one pint that bothers me considerable. You see

these youngsters don't know their names from a general trainin', and we've got to fix up something spry for them. Now, that one over there by Dulcet, with the angel's head on his crooked body, *he* says the old hag called him 'Crip;' *that* is insulting and personal. I declare, Jan! I've been a great mind to cry forty times, to look at him and hear him talk. Of course he'll never be the value of a row of baby-pins to work; but, somehow, I feel softer-hearted towards him than any one on 'em." The captain blew his nose and wiped his eyes. "I wouldn't have missed havin' him on no account whatever!"

Sonsie came up, all fervor and fire.

"Mr. Vedder, they're beautiful, sir, indeed! I never saw such a pair of boys! I'd be sure they were Irish, only I know no Irish mother could be so cruel to her little ones. Oh, Captain Slocum! what a blessing ye'll get with these, I'm sure!"

"Yes," replied the captain, who was revolving the name question. "Seven golden candlesticks, seven rams—oh, shaw what am I thinkin' on? Come down stairs, Sonsie, with us and help find out some good names for them. Dulcet, she's provided handsomely for the girls, haw! haw! all they can stagger under. Just wait till you come to the christening! We are going to have a bully one as soon as we get 'em fatted up enough to stand it; yes, sir. Now if ye be ready, 'what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music,' you'll see our seven golden candlesticks, seven rams,"—the captain hesitated an instant, with a hopeless look, while he swallowed down something which seemed to stick in his throat, and then he pushed resolutely on, with his fist clenched, which he wagged up and down at every fresh "seven" like an industrious pump-handle,— "seven lambs, seven he-goats, seven bullocks! There, Vedder, I feel better! I've been stiflin' them cretturs and keepin

them under all the while ; now I've had it out wid'em, and my mind's relieved. I feel better. I never *was* so bothered, I vum ! Just as soon as I pitch up that sharp seven, off I go !"

The captain put on his nose-nippers, and took down his family Bible.

"Now, I kinder hanker after Bible names. There ! here's the chapter. Zerubbabel the son of Shealtial, and Jethroō, Jerahiah, Jeremiah, and Bethpeor, and Ashdōth Pischah, and Bethjeshimoth." Captain Slocum took off his glasses, and tapped the page with them. "There, by Jemima ! the long names in that chapter's thicker'n hairs on a cat. What do you think on 'em ?"

"Rather wanting in sweetness, a little jaw-breaking, are they not, captain ?"

"Well, I don't know but what mebbe they be," replied he, with a discouraged air ; "we'll look further."

"I wish you would let me name them," said Sonsie.

"There, come ! you shall ! You found 'em, and you shall name 'em. That's fair, ain't it, Jan ?"

"Better be careful, sir ; you will have a lot of young Patricks about your place — not able to kill snakes — if you trust her."

"And is that the fashion of gentlefolks' manners, to turn the tongue against the blessed land ?" said Sonsie, with her head up. "The true Irish boys are brave as lions and gentle as doves ; and I don't know a sweeter name in the whole world, sure, than 'Morris !' It just melts on the lips like the love-song of the wood-quest."

Jan thought it did on hers, at any rate ; so he said,—

"What is it, Sonsie ? Say it again."

"Morris, sir. An' ye are not able to gainsay me either, nor match it among all yer Dutch things, that tears the mouth to pieces entirely."

"Very good! very, indeed!" remarked the captain, approvingly. "Go on, Sonsie."

"Well, sir, then there's Terrence — only a true, kind boy should bear that — and 'tis sure and certain, in the home that you and Miss Dulcet give, yon lad he will learn to carry himself upright and strong."

"Thanks, Miss Eagan! What a girl she is, ain't she, Jan? Yes, indeed, 'upright and strong;' that's capital! Two of them named and clenched, — now for the third."

"How could you fancy 'Jan,' for a change?" asked Sonsie, her curling lashes touching her delicately pencilled brows, as she lifted her blue eyes archly to the young man at her side. "Ye couldn't choose the name of a truer gentleman."

"Done, my girl! bravely done!" sang out the captain, seizing both her hands and shaking them.

Jan's cheek flamed through the dusky sun-brown, and his pulse leaped, but only for one instant; he reflected that if there were hidden in Sonsie's breast the shy love he desired to have there, she could never name him so lightly.

"Now, there's that angel of patience up there; what shall we do about him?"

"Let him choose for himself, sir. Perhaps he remembers his own that his mother gave him. I'll go fetch him, till he tells us."

She stepped lightly off, and soon returned, leading the hump-back boy by the hand. "He says he thinks he was Clarence, before he got his fall and this," touching his misshapen shoulders softly; "he seems to remember it, and he dreams often times of a pretty lady."

"Well, my boy," said the captain, very kindly, "will you choose that for your name, now."

"May I have what I like, sir?" asked the cripple, clinging fast to Sonsie's hand, and looking sedately into her face.

"Certainly, child, any thing you say."

"Then let me be called by *her* name, sir, if you please" — he spoke in a low, plaintive voice, which had always a memory of suffering in it. "This loveliest, pretty one, that looked heaven into my eyes when I was dying; let me have her name for mine. I'm going to be a good boy, sir, while I stay, and I'll be sure never to blacken it with a dirty spot."

Sonsie gazed down at him an instant, her deepening violet eyes drinking up the pensive sweetness of the look he fixed upon her, and then she flamed crimson red, and trembled all over, and her tears gushed out like a summer shower, and she sank down on the floor, and took him close in her arms. "Oh, my dear Lord Christ! how good, to let me live that day, and help in this blessed work," sobbed she.

Captain Slocum and Jan walked away, and I could not swear that there were no tears in their eyes, as they left the humpbacked cripple and the beautiful maiden — the two "Sonsie's" — together.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

"THERE'S NO FOOL LIKE AN OLD FOOL."

HE widow Goldsmith was "cleaning up." It was Friday. She always scrubbed and scoured on Friday. It was part of her religion, as much as the Great Tribulation or Fast Day, and she had just come upon Chris's Penny Magazines, and pounded them together, and stood glowering at them, when she heard a knock at the door.

"I b'lieve I'll burn 'em up. I hate the sight on 'em," said she, through the blue slit she used for talking, as she stalked off to glare upon the intruder.

It proved to be a peddler, — a great, tall fellow, whose striped trousers were tucked into his rusty boots ; who wore a long-tailed coat, high-crowned battered stove-pipe, a check neck-tie, twisted loosely around his neck, and a reddish beard, reaching his waist, reddish shaggy eyebrows, and a stiff, sandy crop sticking straight out, all around his head. He was freckled like the spotted pard, and tanned the color of a well-done sheep-skin.

"Want to buy any tin-ware, marm?" (nasally) "I've come from Bosting, by the way of New Having, with a load of tin oovings, in my one-horse wagging."

The widow was just about to slam the door in his face as the quickest and most emphatic mode of reply, when she pricked up her ears, catching at one of his offers.

"Swap for old close, old rags, old ingy-rubbers, old books!"

She eyed askance the volumes which were dear treasures to her only daughter. She held a couple in her hand ; and there were twelve of them all together, and the pious old lady smiled a grim, forbidding smile.

"Old books, hey? — and what'll ye give for books — nice ones, full of pictures? Peddlers are the biggest cheats agoin' ; I shan't throw away my libry, I can tell yu!"

"Why, Lord bless you, ma'am, I wouldn't take in a new-born baby, and I don't believe you would nurther, by your looks (from the cold, I mean)," said he, to himself. "Bring along yer vollums, ma'am. I expect we can make a trade! I've got basins, pans, skimmers, collanders, any thing. Whoa, there, you old she-devil, you!"

The widow started back involuntarily. The peddler, though

addressing his horse, toward whom he was looking, had shouted his adjuration into her unwilling ears like the crack of doom.

"You can holler loud enough, I should hope!" said she, staring indignantly at him, and feeling of her left auricle.

"I hef to, marm, my old mare is so gall-darned ugly. She run away 'tother day and spilt out all my tinware on the road. I shan't be able to sell any more skimmers on that rout for six months, on account of them the youngsters picked up and toted home to their ma's. They glutted the market. Stan' still, can't ye! I'll tell ye what, marm; sposen you rig on your bunnet, and come deawn to the gate, where I can give her a yank once in a while; and I cacalate we'll make a scrumptious trade. Bring along a sample of your books, tu. I du luv ter fix up a bargain with a real smart woman. There's that pesky critter — Lord! how she rattles my tinware! I'll go along deawn and lick her till you come."

He shambled off with a long lope, brandishing his whip, and addressing his mare by a string of pet names, of which "blunderbore" and "stick-in-the-mud" were perhaps the sweetest.

The widow tied up her head, took three or four of the dear old books (Fred's gift to his curly-haired darling), stalked stiffly off, and was soon engaged in bargaining and haggling.

"Well!" she exclaimed, at length, "I never see a fellar that could cough and hem so loud as you do! I sh'd think you'd rasp your throat all to bits, scrapin' on't so all the while."

"I've got a drefful cold, marm! I slept in the field last night with the gate open, and it settled on my lungs, I'm afraid. AHM!

"Little nervous, ain't you? well here's a stew pan to bile yer catnip and tansy in — *thutty* ceants in trade."

The old rose-bush close to the kitchen door rattled, and Son-sie Eagan darted out. She glanced quickly down the avenue,

where the peddler's "ahems" roared off at intervals, and lifting the latch, she entered the house, and flew swiftly up the stairs.

"Why! there's my 'white angel's' trunk, sure enough! The lyin' old woman, to say she'd put it up garret!"

She was passing Chris's door on her way upward, and she stopped, and entered the room; the rosy-gray dresses, the pale poplins, white aprons, trim shoes, round hats, etc., which had filled the trunk, were spread out on the dismantled bed; and it was the work of a few minutes for the ambidextrous maiden to fold and replace them, which she did even to a bit of ribbon and a stray hair-pin she found on the floor. She locked the trunk, pulled it toward the window, softly raised the sash, lifted the heavy thing by main strength, and then stood irresolutely balancing it half-in, half-out.

"I've heard that these sole-leather ones can be pitched out of a third-story window without hurting them, but if this should burst open! I'm afraid to risk it. Ah! there's a rope!"

Letting her burden easily down, she took from the wall, among cards, hetchels, and other kitchen gear (the widow felt a spiteful pleasure in using Chris's room as a store-place for cast-offs), a clothes-line, tied it to the trunk-handle, and then to the old bedstead, leaving a little slack to start on, and dropped it as carefully as she could down above the lilacs. The peddler's voice reached her, and his "ahem" was so threatening, that she let it slip through her hand. Down it went with a run; the bedpost creaked and groaned, and the rope parted. Sonsie looked fearfully out. "And you can!" said she, triumphantly; "there, 'tis as safe as a lady-bug in a rose burl."

The young girl had just latched the kitchen door behind her, and was standing on the broad step-stone, when the widow, her arms full of pans and basins, turned the corner and faced her.

"What do *you* want?" inquired she.

"I came, ma'am, to see after Miss Chris's little trunk, and to beg you to let me take it up to her," said Sonsie, humbly. "She didn't send me; but I felt so sorry for the dear young lady, among all those fine-dressed gentlefolks up at the guard-house, I was sure you would kindly give me leave to get it for her."

"Oh! that's your arrant, is it? Well, you may tell the dear young lady" (mimicking Sonsie's manner), "that when she's come back and begged my pardon on her knees, and rolled up her sleeves, and put in and worked and airnt 'em, I'll see about it. Now you've got an arrant back, and you may trot and carry it as soon as you like."

The widow's eye blinked black and sly as she looked at Sonsie. She felt sure that her daughter was deeply mortified, and would be obliged to return and beg for mercy; and she had a quiver full of texts all ready for firing at her.

"Oh, please, ma'am, don't send that word by me; I couldn't bear the sorrow in her two eyes, so soft and kind, brimming over with grief. I pray you to be merciful. She's a sweet darling entirely. Sure 'tis a blessing from God, such a beautiful daughter!"

"Well, I declare for't! A wicked messenger falleth into mischief. A fool uttereth all his mind.—Proverbs xiii. 17. I've had enough of you; take yourself off."

"What's the matter, marm?" asked the peddler, who was coming up with the balance of the trade; "hired girl runnin' off?"

"No, 'tis her daughter, the loveliest white angel! as beautiful as a flax-flower. I entreat this mother to be kind to her daughter."

"*Her* daughter!" said the peddler, looking in redulously up

and down the widow, and stopping his eyes upon her wrinkled visage, — "'white angel!' oh, shaw! get out!"

Mrs. Goldsmith conned his application of Sonsie's statement in grim rage.

"If you don't start, I'll take the broomstick to you! you Irish hussey!" said she.

"Come, come! old woman; fetch the rest of them volumes. I'll be jogging before you females come to blows. I like cock-fights, and I think I should admire to witness a bull-fight; but a woman-fight! — I'd rather shuffle off."

"You may tell the 'white angel' I've sold her magazines for paper-rags," said the widow, jocosely, as she brought out the books, and threw them down upon the door-stone; "there they be! now *shuffle* off, both on ye!"

She laughed with such music as a creaking grindstone makes, as she slammed the door and bolted it. Coming round to the window, after a little, she stopped and squinted out.

"Seems as if I see a box or sunthin'! What in the land of the living they got there, histin' up into the cart! some truck or other he's been swappin' for, I s'pose. Well! the idea of sendin' that Irish hussey to *me*! I wonder if she thought she could coax *me*!" (up went the widow's case-knife nose). "I'll burn up them duds, lock, stock, and barrel, before I'll let her have 'em to flaunt up there in! 'Sorry for her,' hey? Well, she'll be sorry for herself afore she's done with me. I'll bring her down on her marrow-bones!"

"If you should be sick," — what ailed the widow that she could not get rid of those few simple words, — "If you should be sick?" The lonely room, the pale, helpless creature, stretched there to die; no daughter love attending her. She gave the chair an unpleasant shove, as she turned from the window.

"Eleven o'clock! I'll have my season of prayer afore I pick

over the beans. Let me see, where was I! Oh! Isaiah xiii. 6: 'Howl ye, for the day of the Lord is at hand! and the gladness is taken away, and joy out of the fruitful field; and in the vineyards there shall be no singing, neither shall there be any shouting! the treaders shall tread no wine in the presses.'"

While the widow was enjoying her comfortable doctrine, the peddler and Sonsie were driving gayly up the glen road, with Chris's trunk among the "tin ovings," behind them.

"Well, Ollam Folda, how do you like me in my new character of Connie Sougah?" asked he, pulling off his stove-pipe, and feeling carefully of his sandy crop.

"I think you are just splendid, sir! As impudent and full of blarney as Barney hissel', and that is high praise."

"Could you fancy playing Katie to me? She was a sprightly lass, all mirth and pathos, just like you, Sonsie; and as stubborn as Ollam Folda, too.

"In a corner of my heart, which nobody can see,
Two eyes of Irish blue are always peeping out at me."

Sonsie seemed not to notice the earnest face of the speaker, but she took up his song, and trolled it out so clear, that the deep solitudes of the grassy glen repeated kindly the echo.

"I wish ye'd take off all that hair and stuff, sir." Sure I like your face just as your mother knows it, too well to look at it thus; and if ye'd just stop by this clear brooklet, and give it a scrub or so, I'll hold the peddler's horse for ye, the while" (reaching out hands coaxingly toward the lines); "I think it was a shame of ye, all the ugly names ye threw at this pretty creature, the morn! Ollam Folda is bad enough, in especial, when you fit it on to a Christian lassie."

"The colt is honored, Sonsie, because he got his name of a sprightly raider, and the old king was a very handsome fellow—

nearly seven feet high, and a true Milesian, everybody knows ; and his title fell upon as pretty a creature, to my eye, as ever tripped among the daisies ; and the first letters of her old name are Sonsie Eagan."

"Come, Mr. Jan," interrupted she, "let me hold yer horse till ye wash off the brick-dust from your face ; 'tis clear that ye are not able to speak the truth, with it lyin' so thick on your lips."

"First tell me that you will play Katie ; and if you promise fair, I'll let you drive your namesake, and make him step out his best."

"I think I could, sure, if I tried, sir ; I'd have to learn how first ; and do ye mind how she danced the night, as light as a thistle-down that floats amongst the lilies. Oh, that was a brave evening, indeed, sir ; better than the other, when Barney made such a fool of hisself, in bringing the Irish folks into ridicule."

Another opportunity lost. Jan felt like a coward ; when he had had the words all ready, and not been able to utter them ; but, poor fellow, her ripe mouth touched up into mischievous archness ; her positive, self-asserting head, cocked a little on one side, and her merry eyes looking so modest-bold into the depths of his, were confusing, and the golden minute went by unused. He would not wash his face, though, till he had finished his work.

Deb was sitting in her kitchen, like a house-god, with her hands fixed on her knees, and she rose and stepped to the door, in answer to their breezy call.

"Here we are, Debby, acushla, 'snug as a pea in a pod !'" called out Sonsie, clapping her hands in glee. "Come, give us a lift, and we'll just flit it up close and fast, before anybody knows it."

"Well, I never !" ejaculated Deb. "I wouldn't like to be

you, and that dame at my back. She'll pin you with her evil eye, now, I'm afraid, before ye're done. Did ye coax and wheedle, and she peltin' away with her awsome scriptures, till ye tired her down; or did ye break open the place, and carry it out with a high hand?"

"We managed, Debby dear. Sure Mr. Jan is the one for charmin' the old ladies; he'd steal the sweet notes out of the song-bird's throats, and they sleepin'."

Jan blushed through his brick-dust, and fully made up his mind to charm a "yes" from the girl he loved, before he was a week older, and was thinking how to do it, when she came out again.

"All safe and done, Mr. Peddler."

"Yes; but here are the books, Sonsie." He handed out the magazines. "Is it true that those are the cherished treasures of her daughter, which the old lady has traded off for tin-ware?"

"Yes, sir, they are. Miss Chris showed them to me a thousand times, and her own papa gave them. I've watched her touch them tenderly, with her pretty hands, as I'd finger me beads; and 'tis thue for you, they're full of beautiful idication intirely."

"Well, Sonsie," said Jan, with a visage of absolute disgust, "if you want my opinion upon a theological doctrine, I'll give it freely. I believe that the widow Goldsmith will toast her feet at the good fire, that they don't rake up nights, in the congenial society of Judas Iscariot, Esq."

"If ye think that, Mr. Vedder, it will be a good place for ye to put some of your money, in masses to help her out of Purgatory," said Sonsie, slyly.

"Purgatory! You don't believe any such trash as that, do you, Sonsie? And if it was Gospel truth, why should I help that old lady?"

"The fourth motive for praying for the dead, laid down in our catechism, is *our own interest*; because the souls delivered by our prayers will intercede for us before God, and aid to get *us* out of Purgatory, when our time comes. That is what it says."

"Well it don't say true, then ! and I'll tell you why. A bass-wood tree that you cut down to-day don't get to be a sugar-maple to-morrow, just because it has lain on the ground all night ; and a treacherous, lying human soul, that quits its body to-day, won't be an angel to-morrow ; no, nor the day after, nor the millennium after. If you burn a bass-wood tree, you get bass-wood ashes ; and burning the soul of the widow, a thousand years or so, is not going to change the quality of it. If she got out of Purgatory, and St. Peter let her in through the pearly gates, she would be Widow Goldsmith still, and she'd cross and rack her daughter as fierce as ever, if she got the chance. Pain never purifies anybody. Penances don't count. People get tired of suffering, and are glad to get rid of it ; but as for cleansing ! there's only one way for the healing of the nations, and that is the atonement Christ made for us all. That's so, Sonsie, just as sure as you're handsome ! all the masses this side of the New Jerusalem won't cleanse a single stain."

The young girl took up the books thoughtfully, and walked off, with her arms full ; and Jan's earnest words so unexpected, both in tone and quality, still possessed her soul, when she laid them in the tower-room, and even while she explained the reason of their being there.

Poor Chris's sense of fun was tickled with the adventure, and she laughed merrily, at first. But the sorrow came presently to the surface. Her position, shut out of her father's house, unloved, shaken off ; and she sat down and took a little cry, and Sonsie come out strong as comforter, and Deb trotted up to

tell them that the peddler's horse was getting restive, and Sonsie, after a last hand-kiss, came down as bright and fresh as a rose-bud.

"Come, Mr. Tin Oving, what'll I give ye to bring down me box to Mrs. Blair's, along wid yer skimmers and things? Shall it be a sixpence, then?"

"Yes, I'll do it for a Yankee sixpence, Ollam Folda," replied Jan, laughing.

"Cheap enough, isn't it, Debby dear," said Sonsie, with the reflective air of one who drives a hard bargain; "and ye'll engage to lave itself up stairs, and not be tiring out me hands wid the weight of it."

"Certainly; on the top of the house, if you say so."

"Don't ye think, Debby dear, that living along with the cute deacons and things is makin' me sharp at a contract?"

"Don't let Mr. Vedder cheat you, Sonsie, girl," replied Deb; "look at the mischief in his eyes; he means a kiss."

"And is it a kiss, sir! If ye wish to be sweet friends wid me, ye must keep yer saucy tongue from such jests;" retorted the young maid, blushing like a red, red rose, as she walked off with her head up. Pretty soon she descended swiftly, showing an alarmed face.

"I've lost me beautiful brooch!" said she. "I've tossed out all me things, and searched the whole place, and not a sight of it can I see!"

"Nonsense, child!" Deb answered, stoutly, "'tis on your twilight. I saw it there with my own eyes; and what's more, I took it into my hand, and looked at the glistening sheen of it."

"I wish ye spake truth, Debby dear, as I know ye mean it; but 'tis not there at all; and so bonnie and green as it was; and such kind words as I got wid it from Mr. Craigenfels! Oh, dear! what ever'll I do!"

Jan looked curiously at her, wondering if she knew the value of the gem.

"Never mind, Sonsie. I daresay we can find its fellow at the jeweller's below; don't fret after it; how much did it cost, think you?"

"Sure, sir, I niver asked. It was for the pleasantness of the pretty day, and the kindness of the giver, that I valued it; not for the bit of money in it! A couple of dollars, it might be, or so, I suppose. I'll ask the young ladies did they see it, and ivery soul on the place, till I get it, because St. Patrick hisself knows it didn't walk off alone."

Belle Brandon was coming proudly down the broad piazza, dressed for a drive, and Uncle Alec, hat in hand, was keeping pace with her, chatting pleasantly. The glamour of her charms was about him. The harmony of her motions, of her well-chosen attire; the faint odor of heliotrope which she always wafted around her; the musical ripple of her graceful conversation; and the thousand nameless charms men found in her presence, — were telling upon the kind old fellow, who neither sought nor shunned his guest, but who thoroughly enjoyed what she lavishly bestowed upon him.

Sonsie walked straight up to her.

"Miss Belle, did ye see me green brooch any place?"

"What do you mean by such impertinence?" demanded Belle, haughtily. "Where could I possibly see any belongings of yours, pray? except upon your robust person (which I will trouble you to remove out of my path), where I certainly should not give myself the pains to examine them."

Uncle Alec was amused with Sonsie's direct appeal, so unconscious of the affront on the face of it; and he also could not help admiring Belle's superb attitude of disdainful anger, ever while he was obliged to disapprove rather of her reply. "Edu-

cation to blame," thought he; "and how transparently she shows all her feelings — artless girl!"

"Your winged words fly home more Hibernico, Roukie," said he, quietly. "I don't imagine your emerald fairing is lost past recovery; those trifles have a trick of slipping out of sight occasionally. You will find it, never-fear; only set your Irish eyes peering into corners."

"Indade, then, sir, I wish I had 'em as sharp as the Kelpie queen, that can see into the dark sea-caves, and lighten up so plain that folks are able to spy the tiny shells and fishes down there, and the elfin children, and all; and 'tis thrue for ye, if they'd look upon Miss Brandon once you could read ivery thought inside of her. Ah, wisha! if she'd but rise in her mist-mantle out of yon lake, and come amongst us, before the day were a minit older."

Uncle Alec smiled benignantly upon the blonde, counting the statement a choice compliment; but there was something so like a threat in Sonsie's face that Belle felt half afraid of her, and she said with a pretty gushing smile, —

"How full of odd superstitions these emerald Catholics are, sir!"

"Superstitions, is it! and there's not a true Irish girl livin' but would scorn the dirty tricks I've seen a lady do; and the lyin', decavin' words I've caught off her tongue, and she lookin' like peaches and cream the whilst."

Sonsie wheeled about, and Belle waited till she was out of ear-shot, before she said, easily, —

"Depend upon it, Mr. Craigenfels, that girl knows what she's doing. She has either sold your beautiful brooch, or given it away to some clod-hopping lover. There's no end of deceit and tricking in those creatures."

Uncle Alec, with the heir of Brookedge in his mind, laughed

at the "clod-hopping lover," and was at considerable trouble to correct the young lady's fixed impressions concerning the serving class, which, however, he thought sat rather prettily upon her, taking the form of dainty patrician prejudices; and he reasoned and jested, and she listened archly, and accepted *the rôle*, and permitted herself to be gracefully convinced, and confessed to an awakened interest in the subject she had never experienced before, which of course was education again; and she looked bewitching when she exclaimed, "Oh, do tell me, sir, something I can do *here*. My mission people, at home, were so dirty and stupid, I must own, they *did* disgust me."

The jolly peddler had heard the talk from his seat among the skimmers and pans, and his eyes laughed as he climbed down and shambled towards the aristocratic pair, who were waiting for Black Tramp and the phaeton. His whip was stuck under his arm, and his rusty hat tilted over his left ear, as he scratched his sandy crop.

"Want to buy any tin notions, marm? I've come all the way from Bosting, in my one-horse wagging, with a lot of tin notions."

"Now, really, Mr. Craigenfels, you must not scold my hyperdelicacy, if I withdraw a little from *this* specimen of Yankee vulgarity, which stands out all over him, like the quills upon the fretful porcupine. Ah, sir, your doctrine is tottering; surely no educating process could ever bring a gentleman out of such material," — Belle stepped back and drew up her robe.

"Now, my dear young lady!" expostulated Uncle Alec, "how are you going to bear the rough places in life, if you shrink away so, like my mimosas, from all coarse off-shoots of fallen humanity?" But while he talked, Belle knew that he did not the less admire her for her daintiness.

"Skimmers, basins, toasting-forks!" continued the persistent peddler.

Uncle Alec waved him off.

"No, no, my good fellow; I'm afraid you are on a fool's errand to-day. Perhaps I ought to apologize; but really I don't want any thing in your particular line. Deborah!"

"Fool's arrant! no sir-ee! I kum in special to fetch up a trunk for my particular friend, Miss Goldsmith, and she's far from a fool. She's got the chist all safe, but I feel it my dooty to be diligent in business. No offence to that young woman, I hope; she didn't think I was arter her, did she? not if I know myself. She does stick up that little nose of hern the darndest!"

"Astonishing, sir, how our dear old Chris makes choice of such odd particular friends, is it not? You really ought to lecture her, as well as poor little me," said Belle, manœuvring her eyes; "but with that originality she prides herself so much upon, one never knows what she may do next. Some of her school experiences were rather remarkable. I must tell you some time about a picture Chandy made of her."

Uncle Alec lost half the value of Belle's speech, and the lissomnes of her supple motions, which she saw a good chance to display, floating down the steps to pluck a purple hyacinth, which she placed in her bosom. He heard Chris's voice, and he stepped to the stair-foot, that he might get a look at his little pet, and call her "Daught, Queen Pansy-Fredrika," and so on, out of the abundance of his great kindness and sympathy; and he came out again, just in time to hear the peddler make Belle an offer.

"If ye'aud like a lift deaun to teaun, marm, — you seem to be kinder hangin' on, waitin' for somebody to pick you up, — I don't mind takin' you in my cart along; plenty of room. I'm

a feller that's allus willin' to do a neighbor a turn, specially for a sprightly creatur; and you look kinder like a girl I used to know. I give *her* a ring with a red stone in it; mebbby your spark gin you yourn"

"Spark!" exclaimed Belle. "I do not comprehend your low expression; but though 'tis of no consequence to you, I will inform you that my ruby is an heirloom — has been in our family for several generations."

The jolly peddler laughed.

"Is that so?" said he, "Well, when I was a boy, I read in my old English Reader a cute story about a Palace of Truth. I should like to see you in it. You'd feel kinder queer, wouldn't you? Well, it looks pretty on your little finger, and you are welcome to it. You won't ride in my cart! Well, never mind; here's a hansum girl that spriggin' up; can't make any hansumer: I guess I'll ask her instid."

"Thanks, brave Connie Sougah," said Sonsie, springing up. "I shall be very grateful for the lift. Good-by, Mr. Craigenfels."

They rattled full tilt down the avenue, the "tin ovings" clattering behind them; and while Uncle Alec was laughing at the amazing grandeur of Belle's reception of the peddler's advances, which is beyond all my word-painting, he snapped his fingers.

"Of course it is," said he. "Why didn't I see it before? Some bit of fun; and Sonsie with him. Deborah!" he called out, as, having seated the blonde in the phaeton, he drove up to the kitchen door, "Deborah, wasn't that Mr. Jan Vedder?"

"Yes, sir, it were. He and Sonsie got Miss Chris's clothes out of the old lady by a merry trick, which was their errand up here to fetch them. They are a heartsome pair of children.

sir, and a good morning's work that they did. Miss Chrissie is all right, now, sir!"

Uncle Alec forgot, in listening to Deb's story, all Jan's talk with the beauty at his side, who exerted her varied powers to fix his every thought upon herself, and certainly he passed a bewilderingly delightful morning.

As they were driving through Gonesusset Street, Belle leaned forward, and clasped her hands in lovely rapture.

"There is Mary Ann Williams, Mr. Craigenfels! Do let me speak to her!"

Of course Uncle Alec drew rein instantly, and was really pleased with the beauty's enthusiastic fondness for her friends.

"Dearest Millithy Nilithy!" she called, in musical accent, "come right directly, and say how d'ye to your own Belle. Are you not glad to see me? So hard-hearted of you not to run up and kiss me, the instant I got home — to Craigenfels, I mean" (a gushing blush, a bewitching apology with her soft hand laid lightly upon the large white one of her host); "but I know you're married, and I must congratulate you. Of course, you have got the most wonderful husband, haven't you? and he is not Cabby, after all. Oh, you naughty, flirting Millithy! I must positively scold you, for your inconstant trifling with that youth's tender heart."

Mrs. Nickson's cheek got paler, and she shrank away, as from a deadly serpent; and Belle who made the opportunity to show off her gushingness and her dimples and her voice and her lovingness, went on, —

"Come, darling, and tell me where to find you; I must talk up old times! Do you live in this handsome place?"

"Yes — I do; I have but just returned;" answered Mary Ann, with some effort: "but I do not wish you to come here, or to speak to me; you and I are strangers. I don't think I

could do you any good, and I fear that you have still some power to do me harm; I am sorry that I have seen you, because your face is like a dreadful nightmare to me."

She drew down her veil, and walked inside her gate, and hid herself behind her own door, as from a hateful enemy.

Belle darted a quick look at the gentleman by her side, who was mentally comparing the two types of womanhood, and who fastened his eyes upon the banker's wife in stern displeasure.

Though she had not calculated upon such a reception, expecting to impress her foil with her elegance, and also counting that the passiveness of the subdued girl would prevent her breaking out before strangers, even if she still cherished resentment for the past, she saw by Uncle Alec's face that she need not despair of making capital out of the scene, and she sank back with a stifled cry, and covered her eyes.

"Oh, sir, do take me away!" she murmured, faintly; "I'm so hurt! And that girl was my friend; she used to cling around my neck. But times are changed now; I am not useful any more. I am poor—she shakes me off. Oh, dear, Mr. Craigenfels, do take me home, to *your* home, and let me hide myself."

The kind old fellow put his arm around the suffering child, and she *did* hide her face, — curls, dimples, and all, — upon his ample waistcoat; and it took a deal of comforting to soothe her ruffled feelings. She executed no end of pretty childish exclamations, "with her rich voice luting soft," and graceful gestures; and raised her eyes, tear-wet and imploring, and manœuvred her lips, tremulous with the depth of her sorrow; and she brought out brighter the peachy-bloom of her right cheek with a dexterous little pinch, so that the affluent gorgeousness of her beauty was something bewildering; and I am afraid

Deb would have looked very sourly upon the pair, out of her common-sense eyes, and said once again, "There's no fool like an old fool," had she been an eye-witness of the proceedings. And really Miss Brandon accomplished a good deal for one morning. First she improvised a sprightly account of her friendship with Mrs. Nickson, which was a credit to her inventive genius. She did the "friendless orphan" "trusting, unprotected innocence," "lonely poverty," and was absolutely artistic in each. She couldn't attend dearest Zoe's wedding — no dress: her ugly, cross, old ogre of an aunt (the ogre touched up so elaborately, with heart-softening childish experiences, that I doubt if the selfish, easy-going Tante Isadore, who was simply a woman of fashion, would have recognized the picture, or been able to remember all the horrid cruelties she had inflicted upon her niece). "She hated poor little me, Mr. Craigenfels, simply because people said I was nice, as if that was my fault!" etc.

Belle got sympathy, and caresses, and what she valued more than all, — she got lavish offers of everything that money could buy; and better still, they two proceeded to the telegraph office, and together wrote a despatch ordering from Madam Corsage a costly dress, point-lace flowers, gloves, fan; and she was so witty and bright, that Uncle Alec considered buying woman's gear by telegraph, the most delightful of amusements, and still kept on saying, pencil in hand, with genial, enjoying face, —

"What next, my dear? Now do try to think of something more."

After the long list was complete, Belle pondered for one instant the feasibility of mentioning diamonds, in case she should finally have to take Zambrano; but she thought better of it, and laughingly assured him that even a wishing-ring could do no more for her, and watched the process of appending the

banker's order, in a pleasing state of childish ecstasy. Ah, Deb, what do you think now? — and such a long-headed, far-sighted gentleman too! Yes, Miss Brandon's pulse beat high; she was very near her object, — money, money, plenty of money. Like poor Miss Kilmanseg with her auriferous leg, the beauty's dream was of "gold, gold, gold; bright and yellow, and hard and cold!" and "really," she speculated, while furtively studying her host's face, —

"Really, the husband-incumbrance I shall be forced to take with it is not so very bad, all things considered. Of course, Zambrano is handsome, of the dark style who would make *me* look fairer by contrast when I lean on his arm, and therefore a very becoming husband to have; and he is passably rich. But he sinks into insignificance when I compare him with this Mexican mine; and then Zambrano is so frightfully jealous, and this golden bowl of an old gentleman she [smiled as she thought how pat was her description of Uncle Alèc's rotund figure] possesses the blandest and most manageable of tempers." Ah! she had never seen him roused by injustice or duplicity; she did not know how his standard demanded absolute truth, — absolute purity, in his beloved ones, especially women; and as for going on to a Cuban plantation, — that was out of the question.

"What were joys of the Pastoral kind
To a bride town-made heart and mind,
Of simplicity never a lover?
Who hated lanes, and who hated fields,
Who hated all that the country yields —
And barely knew turnips from clover."

Miss Brandon had a secret plan, which she scarcely dared breathe to herself, it required such delicate manipulation. There were so many about her who knew her thoroughly, and

who did not love her, — Mary Ann, for instance, who had turned like the worm that objects to being trodden on, that very morning; and that Sonsie! she was afraid of nothing, and wakefully dangerous; and Ruth Blair! she had ascertained, to her exceeding satisfaction, that *she* was out of the way, time of absence unlimited. Any one of these, and many more, might drop words into Uncle Alec's ears, at some chance moment, which would effectually blast her prospects; and she was inly anxious and unceasingly restless, beneath her sprightly careless gushing, till she could fairly sit down at ease in the position she was working for. And as to Zambrano! — "Oh, may some kind mishap tie him close, — a little fever, or the small-pox, till it is over, and he cannot help himself!" she thought, as she parted with her host in the wide hall of the grand old place she meant to own. Such a look as she gave the dear old fellow! such a dainty, delicate, modest little hand-squeeze before she floated off; and such a kiss as she threw him from the stair-head, bending her radiant face, and smiling! Oh, well, never mind; don't talk about it. While she sat in front of her cheval-glass, she let her imagination revel among her coming pleasures, close at hand, almost sure, — their town-house, opera-box, jewels, her Paris trip; and it were a pity, for the sake of the true heart she was capturing, to have to add, her many admirers. And she turned her neck "regal white," and cast about her disdainful glances, and caressed her creamy arms, and smiled. You never saw such a smile! such steely blue eyes! —

"And she dons her silken vestments white,
And tricks her hair in lovely plight,
And nothing doubting of her spell,"

she descends to keep watch over the treasure she fears to lose, fully determined to put herself, as much as possible, between him and everybody else.

In the self-same half-hour before dinner, Uncle Alec smoked a cigar in the library ; and seriously debated with himself the question, —

"Have I a right to take this wonderful girl, so rich in charms, so defenceless, so simple, to my heart, and shield her, and watch her sweet blooming, and worship her? Shall I be so selfish? What have I to offer her?" —

He got up, and strolled across the great room, and gazed at the stout figure his mirror showed him, — the grizzled hair, ruddy face, and powerful manhood which, at fifty, was his in perfection ; and while he felt it a pity that there certainly was crows-feet at the corners of his eyes (he had never noticed them so plainly before, nor the other footprints of spiteful Time, all over his youth), still he felt almost positive that the beauty liked him, and as he heartily meant to gratify her in every wish she could possibly devise, he very nearly made up his mind that he might at least give her the chance to say "no." There could be no harm in that, though he stroked his silky beard, while he reflected on the say-so of the talkers, — "June and November," and the like. Well, he would leave it to the pretty child herself. But if she *would* of her own accord take his hand, and nestle to his heart, his life should be her's — his wealth, every thing.

CHAPTER. XXXVIII

MR. OTHO GROENVELDT BIDES HIS TIME.

THE avenue between the elms was scarcely clear that morning of the peddler's cart and the master's phaeton, before Sabrina's pony-carriage came sweeping over its gravel, and that queenly lady and little brown Zoe descended, bearing a square box, which they carried straight to the tower-room, where they found our Chris busied in removing her clothing from the trunk. In setting her belongings in order she had come across her golden comb; and both from a dear love to its giver, — a sorrowful sweet thought of her happy journey up to Rosenbloom, — and the freedom it gave her to work at ease, she kissed it, and twined her curls around it, and fastened them, leaving some luxuriant beauties to stray over, and caress it at will. Her face looked clear cut, her profile statuesque, and her ears like little rosy shells. She had thrown aside her sacque; and her neck and round arms gleamed exceeding fair, and Uncle Alec's chain of frosted gold and its tiny cross of blue enamel caressed her bosom, and Max's bracelet of sapphires sparkled upon her arm; but she was sorrowful and disturbed. In fact, she was weeping bitterly. Her two friends, who knew every trick of her face, in every one of its changing moods, pretended not to observe her tears while they kissed her, because they saw that she wished to hide them; and they immediately undid the box and laid out its contents, talking busily of the approaching wedding.

"We've ordered your festal apparel, Chris, darling, because we must have the third of our trio before the altar, when I make an April-fool of myself; and is it not a love? We knew

you would be a 'white angel,' as Sonsie says, in pearl color. There, I told you so!" — she added, gazing admiringly at the loveliness before her, after she had fastened the last button. "You are just as sweet as you can be, and live! And Chris, darling, you approve our selection, don't you? You see Uncle Alec told us to buy any thing we'd a mind for 'little pet.' He just worships you, Chris. We get fearfully jealous some times, I assure you."

"Do you?" said Chris. "Well, I'll tell you a secret. Deb has been up here, sobbing and crying. She says Craigenfels is to get a mistress, in the person of Belle Brandon; and though it will break her old heart to leave the old place, where her Bessie used to skipple and frolic, she will never stay to see the disgrace and misery she feels sure will be her kind master's portion."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Sabrina, loftily. "Why, Uncle Alec is a wise, sensible man!"

"I've thought about it myself," replied Zoe. "I know she means to get him if she can. I wish with all my heart that you'd gone to bed and to sleep, before you packed off to Wallack's that night. All our troubles spring from your childish passion for the drama; I couldn't bear to have her come to this dear castle of ours; it seems like profaning a shrine, to have her plucking our flowers, reading our books, and generally disporting herself in a place which we have always called our *chateau en Espagne*; and as for seeing her Uncle Alec's wife! I don't feel as if I could possibly bear it."

"My darling soul, my precious opal! be assured, that the idea is simply absurd. Why, Uncle Alec is as old as papa, and Belle Brandon is a month younger than I am."

"My Uncle Tom was sixty-two, and he married his ward, who was just sixteen," suggested Zoe.

"Your Uncle Tom was a fool *quo ad hoc*. Not so dear Uncle Alec. I shall not think of such a thing for an instant!"

"Oh, very well, dear, don't, then; and I fervently hope Uncle Alec won't think of it, either; and Chris, you must come over the hills and far away with us. My pretties have all arrived, and I intend to pass this afternoon in trying them on; and we are to have the Vedders (and Sonsie, if Jan can coax her) in the evening, and Uncle Alec, and, I suppose, the *bête noire*, Belle Brandon; and papa Bradshaw has promised to bring his violin, and we will have some dancing. Only a few more of our pleasant girl-gatherings, you know; oh dear, I hope you won't count me out afterward, make me an odd one."

Zoe fingered the flowers of her breast-knot, pulled to pieces her pomegranate, and scattered ruthlessly its scarlet petals. "If I thought you would," she pouted, "I'd cut Peter adrift now, and never get married at all."

Ah! how many a young girl has faltered and trembled on the threshold of her new life. Yea! and how many have entered it, to be tricked or tyrannized out of their rightful happiness.

Sabrina went up and kissed the little nut-brown Gypsy, and assured her that her place in the trio should never be vacant.

"Well! I hope so, and I'll have to trust you anyhow; because I could not get rid of that silly Peter if I tried it — he's such a stick-tight!"

Zoe's eyes caught sight of a box on the table, and she flew toward it, exclaiming, "Oh! what lovely something or other have you got inside, Chris? may I peep a little?"

"Nay, my Eve, you may not." Chris laid her hand upon the cover. "Bridle your curiosity, thou daughter of our mother: the time is not yet" And so she kept her secret

of a set of mouchoirs, beautifully wrought in monograms of field-flowers, for the bride's *cadeau*.

"Well, of a truth, then, I may see this!" She lifted a sketch which her friend had but shortly before taken from her trunk, in a frame of braided straw-work, so contrived that both sides of the card-board were visible.

"Chris! perfect!" Chris about to utter some choice proverb; — "and — what! whose work is this, pray?" she exclaimed, indignantly. "Shameful, abominable."

"Oh, that is my skull and cross-bone," replied Chris, quietly. "I kneel and pray before that every morning, though it is the work of no saintly fingers."

"What does it mean, Chris?"

"This side means love and Chandy; this, means Belie Brandon."

The girls exchanged glances.

"Tell us about it," said Zoe.

"I have heard something of that picture, Chris, darling; but of course I could never mention it to you, unless you chose to let me," observed Sabrina.

"But why didn't you tell me, then!" added Zoe, quickly.

"Because I never speak of such of my friends' affairs as I think they desire shall not be made a subject of conversation."

Deborah entered with a plate of tartlets for Chris and her friends; and that young lady put the good creature into an easy-chair, and sat down on her lap, with one arm around her neck while she ate.

"She lets me hold her," explained Deb, humbly, "because she knows I love to. She's like my own sweet Fessie to me. Hasn't she got the pretty neck and the bonnie white arm! the dear" (patting her softly); and then she whispered in her favorite's ear, "You shouldn't ought to eat tartlets in your wed

ding gown, darlin, cause 'tis a hateful omen ; an besides, you might spoil it with the flakes of the puff, you know."

Chris colored, and jumped up. "Undo it, Debby dear, and let me out of it." She had forgotten all about her finery, and she feared her friends might think her careless and under-valuing their trouble and kindness. "Come now, I am in my gray frock, and I only took a little bite, and you shall tell me the omen. I love your signs and wonders. How you used to make my flesh creep when I was a child, with those Norse tales you told in the gloaming!"

"Well, darlin', I've heard say that if a girl eats in a new dress she will wear to a bridal, she'll have to see the beginning or the ending of a death before she takes it off and the wedding guests have gone home."

"Oh, Deborah! what a ghastly old saw that is! Lucky you did not swallow the whole of your tartlet, Chris; though, of course, there's nothing in it," remarked Sabrina.

"Tell us about the picture," said Zoe, quickly; "Deb makes me nervous."

"I didn't go to, Miss Zoe; but my young lady, she bade me speak it, and I had to. I'm sorry. 'Tis only an old woman's sign, after all, you know."

Chris had some trouble to comfort her old friend; and the quicker to accomplish it, she bade her listen to the tale of the picture.

"What a plotting Jesuit that girl is!" remarked Sabrina, thoughtfully.

"Why didn't you let us send her to Coventry?" said Zoe. "I wonder you can endure her near you."

"I do not love her, certainly; but I profited by her lesson, did I not? That *was* a true picture of Christabel Goldsmith, as those who love her best know full well. Is it true now?"

Chris glanced into her mirror; and Zoe flew at her and devoured her with kisses. Deb quietly made up her mind to a move on the board in which that picture should serve her the very first minute she could make it successful.

Chris put on her hat as she was desired, and the trio went down to the library, to wait while Tommy was bringing round the ponies.

"Heigh ho!" said Zoe, flitting restlessly about, "I wonder who will be married next? We know that poor Peebles went mourning home, even as Rachel mourned for her children, refusing to be comforted. Chris, somehow I can see but one destiny before you, and that is the one you found among the daisies. I hope you may be endowed with strength to rise equal to it; and do try to get your own way sometimes, when the terrible time *does* come. As for me, my motto is 'Down with tyrants.' I shall train Peter to implicit obedience. I am started correctly, and I intend always to do precisely as I please."

Sabrina laughed, remembering the snubbing her rosy-cheeked brother had gotten, Christmas evening, at the hands of his betrothed, and she could not refrain from a malicious remark.

"Now, really, Zoe, would you go back to school if you were me, or not. I wish you would talk with Peter about it."

Zoe colored, pouted, and then laughed.

"We must get a husband that will keep you in order, my topping friend. There's Hauxhurst, or Chandy, or Sam. He used to rave over your auburn tresses. By the way, dear, it is always a mystery how you became possessed of your amber locks; your mother has hair like finest flax, and your father wears a shock as black as a Tonawanda's."

"I don't know, I'm sure. Oh yes, I do, though. It is in our family. I had an aunt who married a red head."

Chris had gone off suddenly into one of her reveries, with eyes dreamily fastened upon her friend, so that she did not hear the solution of the mystery, nor Zoe's laugh. Pretty soon she said, fingering the red braids,—

"'Tis like Jane Shores, Zoe. We are told that the Countess of Cardigan had a lock cut from the head of that unfortunate; marvellously beautiful, seeming to be powdered with gold-dust, without prejudice to its silken delicacy."

"Very good, Chris; and true, too. I do enjoy your fashion of bringing out things. It is ever so nice. But I want to talk about getting married now. When shall we put roses and buds into our hair for *your* wedding, Sabrina?"

"When the Bobolink courts the owl
And the mouse the porcupine,
When apple-trees grow in a bowl
And toppers get merry on brine,
When the thistle-down swims on the sea
And the nautilus flies in the air,
When the king comes a-courting to me
And praises my raven hair,

in short, when every thing is upside down and inside out, then, perhaps, I may fall into love, and bend my will to a master."

The door was open into the octagon room beyond the library, where the Mexican and Brazilian treasures were kept, and the gilded idols stood in silent rows in front of the rainbow-tinted shells; and Mr. Otho Groenveldt, carrying a bottle of glue in his hand, having his coat sleeves turned back, begirded with a vast canvas apron, came through it, and bowed to the amazed trio.

"May I ask whither you are bound, young ladies?"

Instantly each turned her thoughts around what she had been saying since she entered the library; and Zoe made a

side grimace, as she remembered the opinions she had aired of the grave young doctor, who was standing before her with a composed mien. If he had heard their talk, there was no evidence of it about him, he being as close-faced and polite as usual.

"Oh, yes, sir, there are some mortals who seem to have a vocation for asking questions, and we will take it for granted that you are one of them. We are about to carry off our Chris, an unresisting captive."

"I am of opinion that you have made an unauthorized statement, Miss Zoe, which events will fail to corroborate. I have need for Miss Goldsmith to-day among these Brazilian butterflies, and I shall be forced to detain her. I'll lend you Bertha, if you like, *quid pro quo*, who is as good as the best."

"Why not keep Bertha for yourself, sir," asked Chris, chafing under his masterful mien and quiet appropriation of her, without even the ceremony of asking her consent; but still curiously humble in her tone and attitude.

"Simply because Bertha would be of no use to me, and you fulfil all the conditions, — memory, accuracy, readiness, attention, and good Portuguese."

Sabrina and Zoe listened, and looked at the two in surprise, and with a feeling of impatience.

"What if we decline to leave our Chris? There is a class of whom we are told that even their tender mercies are cruelties," said Sabrina, a little poutedly; "and what if she refuses to stay, and being a girl of some spirit, I think she will refuse."

"Permit me to say *very politely*, Miss Bradshaw, that I shall recognize but one party in our operations, which is Miss Chris herself; and she will choose to stay; first, because I desire it; secondly, because she likes the sort of work I offer

her. She possesses (we all know quite well) many admirable qualities; among them, self-denial, kindness, and amazing helpfulness, and she is about to put in use her virtues. You will find Bertha in the drawing-room writing letters; and I feel sure she will pleasantly ride bodkin in your phaeton, eat salt at your hospitable table, and lend herself readily to any little mysteries you have in hand."

The two girls were positive and self-willed enough; but somehow Mr. Otho's peculiar manner, half-jesting, half-grave, and his politely cool dismissal of them, hindered any show of resentment. Zoe did try one word, though.

"'Tis for you to say, Chris, I think; will you not abide by your resolution and come along with us?"

"No, Zoe, thank you," answered Chris, faintly. "I think perhaps I ought to stay if I can be of use. I'll come down after dinner; I'll ride Zephyr."

"I told you so, Miss Walsingham! When Sapho turns up her curls in that fashion it means business. In *Lesbos* it meant sonnets; to-day a paste brush will take the place of a pen in her poetic fingers, and a pot of glue will do for ink. The poetry is ready to her hand; she is about to arrange and classify it. *Au revoir*, young ladies; I'll keep *my* captive safe; and I will promise by my faith to give you a sight of her face before the moon sets."

Chris felt shy and awkward when Otho led the way into the cabinet, and she hesitated and lingered, uncertain of herself, and dreading him; he set her the work he needed, and brought out an apron and bib, which he fastened around her neck, and her slender waist, and in half an hour she was smiling, bright and busy. The cloud had lifted from her eyes, the droop left her lips, and her interest and attention were concentrated upon her occupation and her co-worker. Mr. Otho was serene and

joyous. He had carried his point with a high hand, and had gotten Chris all to himself for a whole morning, and he plunged heartily into the enjoyment he meant to have, both for her and himself. His deep-toned voice was musical, and he knew from the face he loved to study that Chris was pleased with his gathering of many themes, bringing odd conceits and quaint quotations to bear upon their occupation, and he was as fond as De Quincy himself of hunting his topics to earth. He always set Chris's brain working, and afforded her double pleasure, because her absolutely perfect memory enabled her to reproduce any conversation in completeness; and she took up her studies with vital energy after one of their communings, quickened and revived by agreeable converse with his intellect; she knew the color of the familiar delight; she had pined for it in secret, mourned over it as lost; and now this morning, among the shining beetles and bugs, and the gay-colored moths, she appetized it with the same keen relish as if the old Christmas had never been. As in water face answereth to face, so her soul responded to his. Even in his love-making there had been no small nonsense, few caresses, less of sense and matter than of mind and soul; and, sitting opposite the only woman he had ever desired to have for his wife, he was an interesting companion, listening as well as talking, bringing out her best points by his natural comprehension and appreciation of them.

"Lift that wing a trifle, Sapho! 'tis a noble creature, is it not? Did you ever hear of the Aurelian, who fell in love with this Camilla's graceful elegance and long after he was too infirm to follow her airy flights, he used to haunt the woods and sit and watch, and feast his eyes upon her inimitable evolutions."

"It seems a pity that these gorgeous beauties have no voice;

the sweet dew of the honey-suckles they sip should make them sing."

"It may be that the lack is not in the Papilio, but for want of Fine ears' power to hear; the fairies go often to butterfly concerts, where the cicada beats the drum, the bumble bee takes the horn, and the firefly furnishes the illumination. Ah! Sapho, I dare say you would like 'the trees to grow by music and the brooks to murmur articulate.' There is water runneth by the mill that the miller wots not of. You must also feed on honey-dew before you get Fine ears' gift. That is a marvelously pretty tale of the 'singing flower,' a Christian knight tells us, and approves the truth, of what he says by his sacred word, and that he himself heard the song 'in calm summer evenings and the stillness of nature.' A pure melodious voice, whose notes went up toward heaven, would suddenly vibrate on the ear. It was the mandragora which thus chanted its nocturnal strains; those who heard it felt emotions they could not express. Their hearts beat with pleasing violence, and tears of tenderness suffused their eyes. Sometimes the nightingale endeavored to vie with the mandragora. But soon the charm would act upon herself; her trills would gradually become tamer, her voice would grow weak; till at length she would cease, and only listen to her triumphant rival."

The voice of the mandragora brought good fortune to those whose ears it had once entered; ever after they heard it resounding from the depths of their souls. It was *poetry* that had spoken to them. "Now I think I'll have Belisama next this Marsyas, though they've no business to be nearer neighbors than Brazil and Java. Yet the gorgeous scarlet, perfect cerise color (who was it called a cherry "fragrance and flavor done up in a red wrapper"), looks well beside the ciel azure; 'tis as deep and intense as Sonsie's eyes, is it not? Did you know

the curious fact that most of the mountain peoples of the world are blue-eyed?"

After a little silence, Chris uttered a thought she had been turning over. "Is it not passing strange that the great naturalists and the lords of science are so many of them infidels. Nature shows them her choicest mysteries, and yet they live and die with no divine Creator in their creed, but refer all things to second causes. One would think a study of this yellow moth, for instance, its pretty plumes, nicely balanced wings, and delicate coloring, would force them to own it *must* have a Creator. I had a Luna come out last week, and I lay awake all night to see it grow. At first the wings were mere specks, and interfolded, and the body was immense; and I watched it inject the juices through their clear cells till they spread and spread, and grew green and lengthened, and the body shrank and lessened; and at two o'clock I had a marvellous specimen, a great beautiful gossamer Luna, flapping its wings against its old prison-house. Only a Deity could produce a butterfly, and yet these great men, who know all about it, are content with second causes. 'Prepare to meet thy God' has no significance to them."

"Ah, Sapho! God is love."

Chris looked up. Though the speaker's face was pleasantly grave, his voice had a ring in it, and his eyes smiled into hers with their old kindling sweetness. "The world has many fearless thinkers, and of course some of them get dreadfully muddled—our theology is not standing still. There is no harm in stirring it up and sifting it; and though there are some points beyond our reasoning, we have a right to study, to search. I don't know how a thinking soul can fail to find its God, and I cannot understand how a loving one can bear to live without its Christ, and everybody as hoping for a heaven. What that

shall be we know not yet. 'Gates Ajar' is a bold book ; but Coleridge out-said it years ago, when he told Charley Larnh that there be persons who place the whole angelical beatitude in the possession of a pair of wings to flap about with, like a sort of celestial poultry. Apropos to angels, Sapho, do you know what designs Zoe has upon us two ? She wishes to drag us in triumph at her chariot-wheels. She will have us for bridesmaid and man."

Chris started and blushed. Like the ancient mariner, he had a spell in his full, flowing voice, which *would* hold her fast. It was glorious music, the echoes of its olden tones were still sounding in the chambers of her soul. She looked at him and wondered what it was about this grave, imperious, proud manhood, which so charmed and delighted and satisfied her ; but as he was waiting a reply, she stammered, —

"Yes, sir ! Zoe asked me to be one of her train of maidens, but she did not name my companion."

"Of *course* you understood that *I* must be the man."

Here it came again ! The feeling of irritation at his masterful appropriation of her, to mar her pleasure in him ; and she replied, quietly, —

"I did not indeed ! nor do I even now see the sequence ; in truth, when she pressed me to come she did not know what spot on the footstool you were pleased to glorify with your sublime presence."

"Indeed !" (provokingly). "There's a destiny which shapes our ends, rough-hew them as we may. Bill Shakes, the inspired friend of your handsome brother, never spoke truer words than those ! You see the mine could not swallow me up, nor the lovely land retain me when I was needed here, and I *am* the man. I do not love weddings. I can never laugh nor jest, when I see two young people join hands and take a leap in the

dark, not knowing whether they shall alight amid flowery meads, or make dismal wreck among bristling rocks. But since Sapho approves, I shall don bridal favors, and walk proudly with her on my right arm, clothed in white, the cynosure of all eyes, the observed of all observers."

Christabel did not know how to answer when Mr. Groenveldt chose to talk in such bantering strain, and she went on dipping her brush, and fastening beetle's wings in rosy silence

"Do you find my friend Max a sprightly correspondent, Sapho?" asked he, quietly, dusting a fresh case.

"No, sir," she replied, looking quickly up, and unconsciously fingering the sapphires which spanned her wrist.

"A most naïve confession, and not flattering to the yellow-haired count. And, by the way, is that a talisman, that your fingers fly to it so often?"

He waited for an answer, but nothing except panting breath came through her parted lips.

"Thus I commence my new labor, I pray you commend my skill; the soft leafy-green dodo for my centre; that is comely. It may be that your bracelet is fellow to the wondrous jewel the Koran tells us Abraham wore around his neck, the light of which raised up the bowed down and healed the sick, and after his death was placed among the stars. Yon royal yellow fellow next, yellow in color, is bitter in taste; so botanists tell us, but it sets off the violet of our purple Midam iras, as the two contrast in the petals of your favorite flower. Do you remember the odd brooch we saw at Ball & Black's, Sapho?"

"Yes, sir," replied Chris, absently, "I think I do." She had laid down her brush, and was dreaming, with her fingers on the table, and studying carefully their evolutions. "Yes, indeed, that is it, key of F. I will call it the butterfly chase, part

first ; the children, say Gracie and Dick, start out to hunt their prey, a magnificent *Papilio Asterias*, who flies just before them ; they rush on, and he settles on a low bush, and Dick seizes him and tears his plummy wings, and Gracie is sorely grieved, and weeps. I'll write it out this evening, and I'll have for my motto 'Wordsworth's sonnet to his sister.' My sister Emme line and I," etc.

"What are you planning, most versatile Sapho ? do you meditate a sonata to add to your Lesbian productions ?"

He stopped his work to watch her, and through the half-teasing, half-inquiring tone of his question there ran a sub-current of eager pleasure, which seemed like pride in the young creature he was studying so closely.

"No, sir," she replied, quietly, resuming her work, "only a fantasia. You managed somehow to bring to my mind that butterfly chase of Wordsworth, and I intend to try to write a piece of music to it. I believe I *can* do it."

"I have not a doubt of it, Sapho, and when you have it complete, I'll take it to Huntington, and have it gotten out in good shape, and we will play it together."

"Thank you, sir," Chris answered ; but all the while she felt the same unrestful trouble to mar her enjoyment.

"*Revenons a moutons*, Miss Chris. I spoke of a certain pansy brooch, which Miss Brandon desired Uncle Alec to purchase for you ; very thoughtful, was she not, and exceeding kind ?"

"Thoughtful ! the fewer thoughts she bestows upon me the better I shall be suited, and as for her desires ! they are of less account to me than the spider's most attenuated web," replied Chris, with curling lip.

"You do not love the blonde beauty, Sapho ; though you must admit that she is strikingly handsome."

"I am told that men believe all women are spiteful toward each other, and I dare say it will sound like it when I tell you that Belle Brandon is not pretty to me, because I cannot look in her face without being unpleasantly reminded of dangerous or creeping things, and her floating, gliding motions are a presence wonderfully graceful, but somehow they always suggest Geraldine and Lamia. I am afraid I must confess to a thorough dislike to her, a dislike grounded upon excellent reasons."

"That is no news to me, you transparent pensée. I must read you a lecture upon the charity that believeth all things, suffereth long and is kind, doth not behave itself unseemly. What chance, think you, a young or an old fellow would have of domestic bliss, or of ruling himself, mated with her. The gray-mare the better horse, hey, Sapho!"

Chris looked at him, and at the golden lizard he was holding up in its tiny phial, between his eyes and the sunshine, and she felt sure his thoughts pointed in the same direction with those of faithful Deborah; and now came out one of the oddities in her which Otho especially liked: she left the subject for a side issue, and avoided giving an opinion.

"That current saying, sir, refers to the fact that in old times the gray mares of Flanders were preferred to the finest coach-horses of England, even as those of the Kocklami are reckoned priceless by their Arab masters, after a successful endurance of their one terrible trial, — a race of forty or sixty miles, without respite, and a deep-water swim afterwards; then, if the animal comes out strong, and takes her food with healthy appetite, she is counted worthy of all tenderness, and absolute worship."

Otho smiled while she proceeded to relate the horse-anecdotes she had picked up, no one knew where, — the docility, sagacity, faithfulness of the race, and the wonderful feats of

remarkable steeds, and he thought how, sometimes, one terrible ordeal in a human life proves the value of it, and develops hidden powers in the soul, and rounds and establishes the character. And who can tell whether the proud man felt any sorrow for the bitter suffering his love had endured, when he found her so nearly perfect in all she aforetime lacked. One thing certain, he counted her worthy of all tenderness, if not absolute worship.

"Thanks, Sapho! Learned also in horse-flesh, as well as poetry. But now, if you have sufficiently exhausted your subject, you shall tell me why you do not like my friend Max's letters."

Chris flamed up under his provoking side-hit, and wished she had held her tongue, and she replied, quietly, —

"I can form no opinion whatever of his epistolary powers, because I have never read any letters of his."

"Nor written any either for his perusal?" asked Otho, looking in her face.

"No, sir; though I can imagine no reason for your inquiry, and do not recognize your right to make it, still I don't mind telling you Dr. Max is no correspondent of mine, nor ever was."

"That is strange, now; because I saw an epistle in Miss Brandon's hand this morning, which I could have sworn was of your graphy, and it was directed to Count Max. She stood by the hall table, turning over the letters, and she picked it up, and remarked upon the beauty of 'our Chris's penmanship.' There, my good helper! many thanks; the last of *Lepidoptera* is placed, and our task is finished."

Chris felt a sense of danger, as if there had been a deadly reptile in her neighborhood, and she thought, "What can the plot be? What does she know of Max or his bracelet,

seeing that I never mentioned him to her, or indeed to anybody."

Otho went on,—

"Max is a noble fellow. I am told that you sent him home happy, and that you await his return ; that you prepare yourself in dainty needle-work, music, study, household lore, to be a countess." He smiled. "I know you are often with Deborah, and that your pretty fingers are never idle, and I learn that you are promised to my best friend. Is it true?"

He was standing before her now, his hands free and quiet, his whole attitude superbly proud and confident.

Chris frowned. She saw that he was playing with her emotions, studying her, and enjoying the amusement ; and, though she resented the position, she could not help the conscious blood that surged through her cheeks, nor the "no" in her eyes. One swift glance conveyed it to him, and with a smile he captured it.

"Ah ! that bracelet again, Sapho. You have worn it long enough, in my judgment. You do not care for gauds ; you told me so on the wall, and again in yonder little summer-house, St. Christabel's arbor. You shall come up thither with me this evening, after Zoe's frolic. Your eyes sought the lily-pads that day. I saw your eyelids flicker as they do now. Come, change with me ! Here are brooch and ear-rings of the same pattern. They were sent from beyond the sea, by a dear motherly friend, who used to call me her 'boy,' — sent for my wife. I have sworn no other woman shall wear them. I will not break my oath ; but I will sell them to you for that sparkling circlet you are so fond of caressing with your pretty fingers. I know where you got the bauble, and why. I pity good, noble Max. He did not understand your soul's history, or he would never have dreamed that you could transfer the love you

gave me to him. Such as you, recognize but one master I had all your heart; I have got it all now! I'll be generous; keep your bracelet, and take also my gems; his for friendship, mine for *my wife*."

In spite of his autocratical bearing, his towering pride, his self-assumption, Christabel loved him. He spoke wisely. Such as she love but once, and she owned it to herself while he talked. It grated upon her to have to own it, and it irritated her to feel how quietly he ignored all she had said to him; how he trampled over her coldness and reserve, and took her love for granted, and coolly appropriated her, as a master commands a slave. She rose in anger, and pushed away the gems he proffered, with such a provokingly serene air.

"If I had forgotten how you made me suffer, how you looked at me, how you let others torture me, I might perhaps be foolish enough to listen to the promptings of the love you count on to subdue me to your yoke. I *did* love you. I do love you still; but I will not help myself to a tyrant, nor you to the unquestioning machine you expect. The dogmatic dictum of the Church of Rome is not more cruel to her poor votaries than the speechless obedience you demand. I have too much common sense to be a good Catholic, and too much will, too much *memory*, to be Otho Groenveldt's wife. No, sir! every moment of that hateful time is ever present with me. You were hard and cruel then; you are hard and cruel now."

Bitter resentment clouded the tremulous light in her sweet eyes, and she hasted from his presence, uncertain of herself, and shut the door of her tower, and tried to collect her thoughts, and to comprehend the tumult of her soul.

After the last fold of her rosy-gray robe had trailed out of his sight, and her last foot-fall had dropped into silence, Doctor Groenveldt restored the gems to his pocket. His face was

clear, his manner absolute ; and he marched up a / down, in his usual quiet, sedate fashion ; and, though he did not put it into words, his thought, as he lighted his cigar, took the form of the ancient motto on the Boar's crest : " I bide my time."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

BELLE STUDIES THE LANGUAGE OF FLOWERS.

THE four dined together. Otho sat opposite Chris, and addressed much of his conversation to her, trying to engage her in a discussion of some Barcarollos he proposed to sing with her ; but though she replied, and even smiled, sometimes, her eyes looked pitiful, her lips drooped, and weary manner denoted suffering.

Belle Brandon was as soft and sweet as cream, coming home from her *château en Espagne*. She spoke little to her host, but she sat at the head of his table, and looked radiant. He often fixed his gaze upon *her*, and lost himself in thought ; and Belle ate as delicately as Aminie picked up her grains of rice at her husband's table, — the beautiful Aminie, who was accustomed to go out at midnight to feast among her friends the ghouls, beside the opened grave.

While the dessert was coming on, Chris bent her head over her flower-vase, inhaling its perfume, and she forgot to lift it, even after Thomas was gone, and the door was shut.

Belle watched her a moment.

" Her large blue eyes 'gan glitter bright,
And the lady, whose voice was faint and sweet,"

reached out her plump little hand, and laughed.

"How oddly fate, or somebody, has dealt with us to-day! Look! I've got our Chris's pansies, instead of my lilacs [a lovely, shy glance at her host, which met its reward; for the dear old fellow had yet youth enough to remember the language of the sweet, purple, old-fashioned blossom]; and you, Chris, have gotten cinque-foil and lindens. Mr. Groenveldt is justly dealt with. See the narcissus, the white roses, sweet william, and wood-sorrel, twined about with bindweed, which salute him, and speak for him; and, oh, Mr. Craigenfels, positively Thomas is inspired; he has given you ash-leaves, and oak, and fennel, to surround your one lily. Poetry, romance, autobiography, every thing! What is that Latin saying, Chris? *Multa — multu*, — come, be kind, and help me out."

"*Multum in parvo*, I suppose you want," replied Chris, without looking at her.

"Yes, dear learned child, I am sorry, but those dead tongues never would slip readily off my lively one; and now, chérie, you shall play Mr. Interpreter to us good Christians, and read our posies for us."

She folded her hands in gushing expectancy, while Uncle Alec complacently beamed from one beautiful face to the other.

"Yes, pet," said he; "Thomas has certainly, for some unfathomable reason, crucified his affections to-day, in that he has plucked the leaves from his most cherished delights, the lindens and oaks he is dwarfing, Japanese fashion, and the longi florum he has cut for me. Now you shall translate them to us."

Chris felt in no humor to comply, but as her kind old friend looked so pleased and expectant, she commenced.

"You have oak-leaves, Uncle Alec; those mean hospitality;

ash : those are greatness ; fennel, strength ; and lily, majesty — of a truth, a most delicate compliment."

"And now for me," said Otho, pushing his flower-vase toward her.

"You are not flattered, sir. Narcissus, selfishness ; white rose, silence ; sweet williams, scorn ; wood-sorrel, joy."

Mr. Craigenfels and Belle clapped their hands and laughed.

"Thank you, Miss Brandon," said Otho, with a queer look at the blonde. "Did not the absent Chandy commend your industry at one time ? If he were here, he might repeat the merited praise."

"Oh dear," exclaimed Belle, suddenly, pushing up her loose sleeve, and pretending to search for a fly, or nothing at all, but bringing her creamy arm before Uncle Alec's gaze, set off by its simple band of black velvet, and she hoped he had made no note of the half-sneer beneath Otho's speech.

"My simple posy needs no reader. We all know the language of pansies, and Chris better than any ; and as for my fragrant hawthorn, I'll enjoy my hopes in secret, and my musk-pinks—well, I don't mind being childish so long as I ge loved ; but yours, cherie ; a curious mingling, truly ! First, you've got lindens, conjugal affection—a little premature, perhaps, and to be taken in a prospective sense—and lilacs, earliest love, is it not ? Nay, mignone, do not blush so deep ; cinque-foil. Thomas has 'ranged the deep forest-dells, and brought back a treasure of buds and bells,' and that means—you must help me, Flora, I'm all abroad."

"Beloved daughter !" said Chris, speaking in a vibrating voice, and looking full in the blonde's face.

There was an instant's painful silence, one of those pauses which startle like a sudden drum-beat, and then Otho took from his pocket a letter, and handed it across the table,—

"Is that yours, Miss Goldsmith?"

Belle playfully snatched at the missive, and her eyes looked like Geraldine's, when she these words did say,—

"Thou knowest to-night, and wilt know to-morrow,
This mark of my shame, this seal of my sorrow."

"Let discretion pronounce, before giving it into the hands of innocence," said she.

"Thank you; 'tis a foolish sheep that makes the wolf its confessor," answered Chris, quietly. She perceived at a glance that it was her writing, and knew from Otho's significant manner that this must be the letter he had spoken of in the cabinet, and she greatly wondered what it would contain.

"Me a naughty wolf! oh dear, Mr. Craigenfels! Is not cherie cruel?"

"If you intended this as a joke, Belle, I must request you to desist from all such pleasantries in the future," said Chris, folding, and putting it into her pocket. The blonde was a little nervous. She had no idea Otho would think of detaining a letter from the post, and it looked dangerous. Still, he had no evidence of any sort, and she turned her swimming eyes beseechingly upon her host, who was quite troubled in his mind by this unmerited persecution and most unfeeling conduct on the part of his other guests, to whom he resolved to speak privately; and the four sipped their coffee in silence.

As soon as they rose from the table, Miss Brandon went up and slid her arm within Uncle Alec's, and said to the others,—

"Come, now, and I will give you some music." She laid her hand upon Chris's, who twitched brusquely away.

"I am going to the conservatory, thank you. I wish to compliment Thomas upon his dinner-posies."

"I will accompany you, if I get permission," said Otho,

walking off by her side. Belle heard and understood, but she did not even wink. She conducted Uncle Alec to his easy-chair, brought his pipe of golden burnish, which it had taken years of assiduous puffing to culotter into those glorious brown and yellow tints, which John Nicot did not live to see, that pioneer in the use of Buglos and Nicotiana. She struck a match, and stopped a moment, kneeling on the footstool at his feet, while she inhaled the divine perfume, and then she tripped merrily to the piano, and sang; and what should he do but listen, and look at her, and appetize beforehand a life with this wonderful creature, so richly gifted, so absolutely charming. She knew how to give variety to her entertainment, also, for she told him school-frolics, and how naughty Chandy made a sketch of his sister one day, and left it on her piano, which, though kindly meant of *him*, was almost cruel in its faithfulness; and she floated up the staircase, and pretty soon she floated down again, a little out of breath, but very rosy, bearing the bit of card-board in her fingers, and so pleasantly did she tell the tale, that Uncle Alec laughed a little before he shook his head and said, "How cruel it was, and how wicked," adding that he could not have believed his handsome boy would have been guilty of such a deed; and she was spitefully vexed that no undervaluing thought of "little pet" had been insinuated into his loyal mind; still, she did not despair.

CHAPTER XL.

DEBORAH MAKES HER MOVE AND FAILS.

HOMAS'S face was a little sour, but he was glad to see his favorites, and he invited them to cut some blooms, proffering his own shears ; which was the most positive mark of confidence and liking he knew.

"What funny flowers you gave us, dear Thomas, to-day," said Chris. — "What ever possessed you ?"

"Possessed me, Miss Chris !" — the gardener made a horrible face — "that blue-eyed girl possessed me ; she tormented worse nor the legion of devils did them swine ; she clipped all my best things, knocked over my new Adonis-leaved Senecio, and snapped up my fullest double Sedum with her long, trainin' gown ; a meddlesome, troublin' imp of Satan, as ever plagued an old man. If she comes again, I'll horder her hout, quick as a cat can lick her ear."

"So it was Miss Brandon who filled the vases, Thomas ?"

"Yes, it were," replied Thomas, throwing away a handful of cuttings, disgustedly, and spitting after them. "I wouldn't a' let 'em stay a' table, only I had all my fuschias to pot, and that nasty young nayger 'ud a got into the place, and waited on my people, ef I'd a' stopped ; he done it once, and I'll never bear it from him again. I'm sorry they wan't no prettier, dear Miss Chrissie. I'll look out herearter, and you and Mr. Otho shall have what'll please you."

This little episode somehow harmonized the odd relations between the two young people, who looked at each other and smiled, and the doctor said, as they left the conservatory, flower-laden,—

"Now, at what hour shall we ride, Sapho? Make it as early as possible, because the day is charming — just perfection for a horseback excursion — and it will be a sweet preparation for the gorgeous sights Miss Zoe promises you afterward."

Chris looked up in surprise. She had forgotten all about the evening, and her engagement, and she dwelt an instant on the rich friendliness of Otho's voice and manner, and the smile she loved to see playing over his dark face, and she knew well that in such a mood he would give her an enjoyable treat; yet she hesitated.

"Must I go?" said she, half entreatingly.

"I think so, indeed," he replied, smiling. "You promised, you know, and I feel like insisting, because I am certain you are about to be friendly and pleasant, and I cannot be defrauded of my pleasure. Sapho in good humor is Sapho delightful."

"For Sapho read Otho," said Chris, quickly. She knew, without stopping to think, all the strangeness of her position toward this domineering, self-confident man, and the inconsistencies of her conduct; but she went, notwithstanding, drawn by his expressed wishes, and her own secret desire.

Belle watched them ride away, and after gazing at Zephyr till he wound out of sight under the trees, she reached out her hand listlessly, and took up a little cigar-holder of Campeachywood, carved with a Dhole's head, and read on its stem, "Yours truly, George Blair," in upright characters, made brilliant with carmine. She clasped it tight in her fingers, the rich blood suffused her creamy face, and her ripe lips closed upon her sharp little teeth just one instant; then she threw it from her with a quick gesture, and turned resolutely to the work she had in hand; and she accomplished during the afternoon all she hoped. She was to be mistress of Craigenfels! Short

time, indeed, to the first of April : but she would be firmly fixed before that day, if nobody meddled. She overruled all Uncle Alec's suggestions for a grand trousseau and splendid wedding, such as befitted her superb loveliness. She was modest, simple, childish, clinging to his strength, resting on his vast experience ; of course he was pleased to please her, and he loved her better for her choice of quiet nuptials, and put away every intrusive doubt, every fear, and held her to his grand, expansive heart, and promised himself to make the darling's life one long dream of delight.

It must have made your heart ache, to hear his talk to her — all the good, beautiful, simple things he said ; how humble he was toward her ; how he blamed himself for taking her pure innocent youth to be his, as if he were doing her a wrong. The old fellow's truth and honesty were so apparent in every word and look, that Miss Brandon knew while she listened that lying and trickery and deceit would awaken his wrath, and she fervently hoped that every body would mind their own affairs, keep their own counsel, and not go babbling and prating every thing they unfortunately knew of her to him.

The pretty tears and smiles which trembled on her lips and eyes, like sunbeams on the water, *they* would have made your heart ache too, knowing her, and knowing him ; but it was all arranged now ; a secret engagement, and a private marriage. Before Zoe should become Mrs. Bradshaw — oh yes, Mrs. Craigenfels would wear her diamonds to the April wedding. She understood perfectly all the difficulties and dangers which encompassed her about with a cloud of witnesses ; she knew the mines which might be sprung at any moment ; but she was watchful and as ubiquitous as she was iniquitous, and she put all her faculties into her work.

Mr. Craigenfels was still seated in the library, where his af-

fianced wife had left him. His cigar had gone out between his fingers; he was gazing at the carpet; brooding would be almost a proper word to describe his look and attitude, when Deb came in, somewhat fearfully, but still with the determination of a strong purpose.

"Mr. Craigenfels, will you permit me to tell you a short story?" said she.

"Certainly, my good Deborah," replied he, rather astonished at the remarkable visit. "Certainly. I am very glad to see you. I have to make the calls mostly; pray sit down."

She refused to sit in his honored presence, but she proceeded to tell the tale Chris had told, eating tartlets among her friends, sitting on Deb's knee. He heard her to the end, and took a long look at the sketch, which he had inspected once before that afternoon.

"Deborah," said he, with dignity, "you are altogether mistaken. Miss Chris also is mistaken. I shall take an early opportunity of speaking with her on this subject. You are doing rank injustice to an innocent, artless girl, who is all warm-heartedness, and as transparent as crystal. I am astonished to perceive how everybody desires to malign and ill-treat her. I am fully informed of the *true* history of this sketch. I know its thoughtless author."

"Who told you, sir, if it be not too bold?"

"Miss Brandon herself," answered he, politely dismissing his old servant, who put up her apron to her eyes, as she walked slowly back to her kitchen. "Oh Lord!" ejaculated she, "there's no fool like an old fool."

CHAPTER XLI.

BELLE BRANDON'S LAST CARD.

AN unexpected visitor had arrived at Craigenfels, and was in close conversation with its master in the library. Madame, having received a letter on the subject of the approaching marriage, and an invitation to assist at the celebration of the same, had hastened to speak her mind, and so preceded her invitation a couple of days.

Belle would gladly have prevented this bidding of an unwelcome guest, and she wasted many gurgling looks and flavored speeches to that end; but when she found it impossible, she begged permission to write the letter, thinking it might get lost, perchance, in the transit, if carefully handled. This went for nothing, because Uncle Alec sat by her, and waited till she had finished, and kissed the plump writer, and carried the missive himself to the post; so there was no help for it. Madame had got to come, and Belle must manage her. She had done it before, often and often, and did not despair of doing it this last time effectually. She had got a promise that no other guests should be invited till Thursday morning, and Thursday evening her position would be established, her worries over.

Uncle Alec was horrified, as well he might be. Incredible as he seemed determined to be, some of the most despicable sins catalogued upon the Sapphire tablets ascribed to his betrothed, and he expected to believe such vile accusations! impossible! Otho being desired by his mother to remain, stood with his back to them, looking down between the elms. Madame sent for Chris, who came full of surprise, and refused to

speaking or meddling in any wise, and Uncle Alec, knowing her truth, looked eagerly in her face, hoping to read something agreeable to his wishes. Then madame sent for Bertha, and ordered her to tell what she knew. Very unwillingly she unravelled the tissue of falsehoods the blonde had wound about her poor foil, Mary Ann, and the heartless trickery she had been found guilty of; but she spoke under protest, and only when questioned mentioned the sketch. Uncle Alec refused to hear any thing more on that topic.

"I have already sifted *that*," said he, "and am thoroughly satisfied as to the author."

Then madame went over Ruth's story. "She confessed that she wrote the cruel letter," said she. "You must believe it."

But Uncle Alec was posted there also, and knew more than they all could tell him—a good deal more; in fact, it had been the theme of a loving confidence bestowed upon him by Belle, the blonde.

"Have you any proofs of this accusation?" he asked.

Madame was forced to own she had none, and the story of the purloined papers was so incredible, that she hardly believed it herself.

"Yes, poor child! I know how you frightened her. She confessed under torture. You are so stern, and she so soft and yielding. You wickedly compelled her, and she bitterly repented afterwards. Everybody is harsh and unkind to her."

Madame looked utterly astonished, that her clear-sighted brother could be so blind. But the fact was, he had before him a vision of two lustrous eyes looking love into his, two cherry lips pressing his, a sweet voice syllabbling his name. He had made up his mind to have her for his wife, and he wished to have her. He wanted her to love, to indulge, to

caress ; nay, he was ready to worship this beautiful creature of God's cunning handiwork, and they were trying to defraud him of his happiness.

"But she is engaged to Zambrano, you silly brother ! She only throws him over for your money."

"Be careful how you make such assertions. You cannot know that !"

"Anybody but a fool, who wishes to be duped, would know that Belle Brandon could not marry a man old enough to be her father, except for money ; and as to the engagement, Dolores corresponds constantly with Hetty Peebles, and she mentioned it for a fixed fact three months ago."

Uncle Alec wiped his forehead. "That is false ; she assured me this very morning that she had never been engaged to any man ! nay more, that she had never loved any man," he straightened himself defiantly, "till I was so fortunate as to meet her. I will not believe such calumny. I cannot ! You are all leagued against the 'unfortunate child.'"

Meantime, Belle was fitting on her new dress, of costly satin, ordered by telegraph for Zoe's wedding. But she meant to be a bride herself first, before she displayed it to them all, and her handsome person — Belle Brandon no more, but Mr. Craigenfels' wife — independent, rich, secure.

By some oversight, the body and sleeves were left untrimmed, and she was rather cross about the omission ; but a close inspection of the point flounce consoled her, and the timely reflection, that she could order a berth at her leisure ; so she bethought her of some rare old lace she had safe in a cinnamon-wood box, and she brought it, yellow with age, fine as gossamer, and such a pattern ! and she complimented herself upon the excellent care she had taken of it, while she sewed it in with her nimble fingers. All dressed, she walked up and

down : then stopped and caressed her creamy arms, and smiled triumphantly. She had a brooch in the secret drawer of her writing-desk, and some whim impelled her to bring it out and try it on.

"Yes," said she, "with ferns in my hair." She heard footsteps in the passage, and though her door was bolted, and no one could enter without her leave, she hurriedly displaced it, and thrust it into her pocket, with her point handkerchief, while she listened intently. Then she settled a loose bud of her delicate wreath more to her liking, tossed off her blonde hair, and stepped out into the hall. Deborah was passing, her arms piled with Chris's washing. She observed the fluting and the clear-starching of the pretty aprons and things. Deb wouldn't iron *her* clothes, but left them to the laundress ; and Deb scowled on her, gliding along.

"Where is your master?" said she, haughtily.

A darker frown and angry grunt were all she got for answer.

"*Your* time is short, my dear!" said Belle, between her teeth, as she followed the retreating form of the faithful old servant, with her Geraldine eyes ; "We'll soon make an end of your airs and nonsense."

She gave her dress a finishing pat, and adjusted her face to dimpled joy, before she turned the knob of the library door, and with her handsome head daintily poised, and her glorious charms displayed, she entered. She was so wondrously, magnificently beautiful, that all eyes rested on her, and all tongues kept silence, as she floated gracefully on.

"I knew I should find you here, sir," she said. "I've come to show you my wedding-dress. How do you like your little bride?"

She commenced her sentence before she saw the other occupants of the room, with their sober faces, and she finished it

with a determined shutting of her plump hand, and quick steps, which brought her between them and him, so that she stood directly before him, and his eyes drank in her loveliness. He rose, took both her hands in his, and drew her to the window, she stepping proudly by his side.

"*Mia Tortolita preciosa,*" said he, in a low voice, while he questioned the eyes lifted trustingly to his, "they have been speaking evil words of you, which I do not wish to believe; and now that I look at you, I feel more than ever certain that they are wrong, and you shall tell them so."

"Oh, thank you, sir," she answered, clinging to him; "that dread woman makes me tremble. I suffered so much while I was in her power; but you are near me now. You love me. You will not let her hurt me, or be cross, will you?"

"Cross! oh no, *mia* Bella; but I hate to repeat what they say. Do you know they would fain persuade me that you are promised to that young Spaniard. If it is true, it is not yet too late. I'll release, and forgive you; and, darling, even if they speak falsely, I'll make you rich, and I will be your friend, your papa." He smiled, he was so sure of her truth. How could he doubt, with those creamy hands in his, those lovely lips, and dimples, and curls, and those shoulders, beneath his gaze?

Belle for one instant thought, "Rich and free! but no; the whole is better than a part. I'll have it all!" and her eyes swam in tears; one great pearl dropped upon his hand.

"You torture me, sir! you are cruel, even to speak of such a thing. I have put to the blush my maiden modesty, to tell you how entirely I am yours; how you captured my poor little heart. A simple heart it is—no image in it but yours—no room for any other love." (A little soft squeeze of the fingers)

she clung to.) "Zambrano! oh no, he is nothing to me. Thank Heaven, he never was or could be."

A dark-browed youth has just stepped from the platform at the Millville station into a hack, and given the order, "To Craigenfels!" He is eager and joyous, and can hardly tolerate the slow-moving horses. He longs to hold his *fiancée* in his arms. Where is Belle Brandon's guardian angel, that she is so fearfully left to her own devices? Meanwhile, the youth devours her last letter, full of tenderness and devotion, and presses it rapturously to his lips.

Uncle Alec turned triumphantly. "You waste your breath, my good sister," said he. "Come, be good-natured, and congratulate your old brother upon the prize he has drawn, the very precious jewel."

He brought her grandly forward, and his face looked so noble and so good, that Chris felt ready to cry, and Belle looked madame modestly but fully in the face. That determined lady returned her *ci-devant* pupil's gaze.

"Stop a little," said she. "Let me hear this young lady speak for herself. Sit down, Miss Brandon, and attend to my questions. If I am to have you for a sister" (a little sneering emphasis on the word), "I will at least take the right to be set straight upon some rather important points."

"Thanks, madame, I'll stand. I can't quite forget the old culprit attitude I was wont to assume, while I listened to those interminable lectures, which used to curdle my very blood, when I was your victimized pupil. I know you always disliked me, and took pleasure in punishing me. I have told Mr. Craigenfels a little about my trials in your power. I think old ladies nearly always dislike young girls, don't they, ma'am. Dear sir, don't we feel like naughty children, standing here? You must make up your mind to be dreadfully tired before we

get off. Madame is such a long talker. Now, then, we are ready ; please to begin. Get your handkerchief out, sir ; you must help me cry."

Madame commenced under rather discouraging circumstances, and her important queries lost something of their dignified effect, from the fact that she was obliged to look up at the smiling culprit, who was occupied in beaming her loveliest upon the gentleman upon whom she leaned. With steady voice and undisturbed mien, she denied the whole. "As to the sketch, you know, I have already given you its history, and Christabel herself will say she needed and profited by the salutary lesson so kindly given her."

Uncle Alec believed every word she uttered, and seeing Deb at the door with a couple of letters, he walked pleasantly to meet her. He was habitually polite to old Deborah, as well as all his servants, who adored him, and he felt especially benevolent just now.

"Two, Debby," said he, "and in an unknown hand. I did not know I had a correspondent who dealt so largely in quirls and flourishes." While he spoke and very leisurely sundered the envelope, he watched the blonde, noticed her little white teeth, listened to her voice, observed her peach-bloom, her grace, her affluent loveliness, and so deeply was he interested in her, and so absently did his fingers move, that he did not see the tiny, "For Miss Brandon," in the corner of the topmost one. He ran his eyes down the page. A little surprise — then an intense look of deep trouble. He stopped reading, and turned hastily the sheet, to the name appended at the close — "Henriquez Zambrano" — and he handed it quietly to Belle.

"I am afraid I have been guilty of the indiscretion of reading your letter."

His voice was so changed, that Belle knew its writer, even

before she convulsively grasped it, and her cheek got a shade paler, but she stood quite still, not turning aside; she kept her face in good order, till she had perused it to the end.

"Poor, silly fellow; he is quite beside himself. I should have been afraid once to get such a letter, but I know I have a kind protector now, even from lunatics like this boy. Do not let him come, Mr. Craigenfels, I beseech you. He is not safe, poor fellow!"

She had quite overdone her last epistle, and her lover was speeding on the wings of love to clasp his impassioned mistress in his arms. But a little time! only a little more time! that was what she needed now. Uncle Alec was perusing his communication, and she waited till he should finish it, and look at her, to begin anew. She threw a sharp glance at the paper. If she could but know the tenor of his letter, she would be able to proceed more safely; but she must trust to chance for finding out.

As soon as he had read the last word, he handed it to her. "You had better read this also, perhaps." He heaved a deep sigh, and the one reproachful look he cast upon the blonde was full of bitter sorrow.

It was a wild, wicked thought which flitted through Belle's mind as she crushed the sheet in her plump fingers. If a fatal accident could so crush the young fellow she had smiled upon, and called her love, a hundred times, and dispose of him for ever. Zambrano desired permission to visit "my betrothed" beneath the hospitable roof of her very kind host, lauding her delicate modesty, which refused him leave, fearful of intruding her affairs upon strangers, etc.; and so sure of a welcome was he, that he was going to venture, and would be with them as soon as he had fixed up some Cuban matters intrusted to him.

"Surely, I am not to blame for the raving folly of a crazy

young idiot. No! nor for his perverse antics, either. I let him come, and he shall tell you that he has no right to assume such a position toward me, and shall be scorned, as he deserves."

Simple truth! bewitching innocence! She looked the impersonation of modest virtue, and while Uncle Alec began too clearly to see that he could not have her for his treasure, he longed to take her in his arms, and shield her from the gaze of those who were looking disgust, anger, horror, at her.

We are told that the angels were hurled out of heaven. They had been well-beloved up to that time. Is not love eternal?

The library door opened wide, and Sonsie Eagan announced visitors. "Mr. Blair and his wife, Mr. Craigenfels," said she, all gladness.

"Yes, here we are, sir, duck and I," spoke up the giant, in his rich, cherry voice. "We know who we are now. We know all about every thing. She's sweeter than ever, isn't she, my dear, good Ruthie?"

Sonsie went up to Chris, her face glowing. "Is it not beautiful to see the bonnie pair of them together once more?"

Belle could not help dropping into a chair behind the great embroidered fire-screen, and a pang shot through her heart. This was the only man who had ever had power to quicken her pulses, or make her dream. She fully believed that he *did* love her, and her Geraldine eyes deepened to glittering steel while she resolved to sway him once more, at least, so much as to cut Ruth to the heart before them all. "She shall see him change color, and feel him tremble beneath the power of my presence."

While they were all gathered around the pair with words of gladness, and Otho held George by the hand, she darted a swift look at the great mirror, questioning the power of her beauty, and came eagerly on, both hands extended, sure of her success, exulting over it even amid all her perplexities, and, so swift is

thought, she had time, in three or four steps she made, to think how she could rejoice to belong to the handsome athlete, and to feel bitter spite at the fate which had withheld from her wealth, with such a demigod.

"Ah, dear Mr. Blair! old friend! please keep one a little smile -- one hand-shake for me. Is not this the crowning of all pleasures, to meet you? I assure you, Roaring River was very insignificant without your magnificent presence."

George stepped back, and drew Ruth closer to him. "Do not look at her, Ruth; do not touch her! Mr. Craigenfels, you have got a walking falsehood here. Be careful, I entreat you! Come away, dearest; you shall not breathe the same air with her! no, not for one moment. I'll visit you afterwards, sir! when you've your house purified and exorcised."

How do you suppose Ruth felt — her secret carefully guarded, no secret at all to her grand, noble husband, who had refrained from touching what he saw she wished to hide? I'll tell you what she *did*. She made a clean breast of the whole before she entered the Horseshoe; and that was the end of Ruthie's rôle of Jesuit, and she wondered when George declared that he discovered it the very first time she uttered Belle Brandon's name, down on the shore, and that it comforted him a little to find duck almost as silly as he was.

Belle had been spurned and despised by them all, but this man she had almost loved. She had allowed her thoughts to dwell upon him in secret, to con over his looks and gestures, his odd querities of thought and expression, and apt application of his flavorful, racy presentations of common-place things. Belle liked many traits, which were specialties of the humorous blacksmith, beside admiring the gorgeousness of his splendid manhood; but it was a liking carefully hidden; a stolen pleasure, enjoyed in secret. She only permitted herself, when

everybody else cloyed and fatigued her. She glanced at the door through which he had departed, and made a step as though she would fly and hide herself. The light around her became throbbing darkness. She threw up her beautiful arms, and gasped, and fell. For the first time in her miserable life, she lost control of her body in the presence of others, and she lay prone upon the floor before them all. Her long lashes dropped upon her cheek, her blonde curls swept back from her fair face, and her lips parted so as to show her sharp little teeth. Never had the absolute perfection of her maidenhood been so apparent, as when the lovely casket lay forsaken by its scheming soul. If she had planned it beforehand, she could not have chosen a more graceful *posé*. Like a tired child — one round arm beneath her head — the other hand grasping the letter, and the rich folds of the costly satin, whose sheen enveloped her. It was not till she opened her eyes that you saw the lurking devil, shameless, determined ; and the sleeping angel was transformed into a watchful demon. So sudden was the change, that those about her drew quick breaths, and started back, and questioned each other's faces.

Deb went up and leaned her hands upon her knees, and peered into the bloodless face of her enemy as soon as she fell.

"Well, 'tis true and real indeed. She's gone dead off. I didn't believe it," said she.

Sonsie came running with camphor and salts. "There, I think that'll bring her to." She thrust the open bottle under her nose. "I'll just dip her handkerchief into the camphire ; it's sticking out of her pocket." She drew it forth, and, entangled in its deep lace, a brooch ! which caused her to drop the bottle, handkerchief, and all ?

"Me green-glass breast-pin !" said she.

Deb picked it up, holding it near and far, looking by turns at it and Sonsie.

"'Tis Gospel truth, Mr. Craigenfels! The thief of the world! She'd got the girl's fairing in her pocket!"

Whether Belle had borrowed the pin, intending to replace it, or not, I cannot tell; but there it was, to witness against her.

"And, goodness gracious, Miss Chris! come and look, please. Either my old eyes deceive me, or here's Miss Alec's lace that I gave to you when you go'd to school. Oh, law! what'll happen next? Well, well!"

Belle, coming to herself, fixed her eyes upon Uncle Alec, who stood a little way off, gazing sorrowfully at her. After a hasty survey of those around her, she rose a little dizzily, and fought for possession of herself, shook her robes slightly into place, and went straight up to him with beseeching gesture.

"Do not cast me off, sir. It was, at the most, but a flirtation. I've done flirting now! Your wife will be always discreet."

He looked sorrowfully at her, and covered his face with his hand, while a little shudder crept over him.

"Take her away," said he, very gently. "Poor child! Such loveliness and such depravity! Unfortunate girl!"

Belle saw her hopes in that quarter dashed to the ground, and she wheeled royally about, and faced them all, and laughed.

"Well, good people, though it is no particular business of yours, I'll tell you what I shall do. I'll go marry my Cuban! He adores me! True, he has not so much money as you doting old grandpa, but he has youth and fire and passion, and he will make a dashing husband."

It appeared that Uncle Alec was holding a reception, for

other visitors were announced. Zambrano! who entered joyously, his dark face lighted and his eyes all ecstasy.

"Mia Bella! in gorgeous array! And is it in my honor that my queen attires herself like a bride?"

"She put on that frock to see how she would look as my master's wife, — Mr. Craigenfels, who is sitting over there," said Deb, plainly.

Zambrano dropped the hand he had taken and his fiery eyes kindled.

"Is this true?" said he, in a fierce whisper; and the troubled, anxious eyes resting sorrowfully upon her answered, even before Madame spoke —

"Yes, my poor Henriquez, it is shamefully true, and you must rejoice that you did not sacrifice your brilliant life to that wretched girl, who has been busily plotting to marry my brother while she was betrothed to you; and she had the audacity to say not five minutes ago that she would take you as a last resort, though you were not so rich as the man who has just cast her off."

"What does this mean, sir?"

Zambrano spoke through his clinched teeth, madly wishing to pick a quarrel with somebody upon whom he could wreak his anger. Poor boy! It was a sad trial, and his hot temper had not learned how to bear crosses in quiet.

Uncle Alec got up and went over and took the youth's hand in his, and shook it softly.

"It means, my dear fellow, that you and I have both been fooled to the top of our bent by a heartless flirt, that's all!"

Zambrano could not bear the tone of the speech, half-banting, half-sad, and appealed to his treacherous adored.

"Speak, Belle!" exclaimed he, passionately. "Say they are all liars!"

She looked into his eyes, which were full of tears, and softly touched his hand.

"I'll explain hereafter, dearest," she whispered. "These people are in league against a poor girl. Come! take me away from their persecutions."

"Henriquez!" said Madame, who thought he was about to yield to her glamour, "you shall not be fooled. I will not suffer you to go without hearing the truth. Belle Brandon had made her plans to be married here to-morrow night. Ask her! Force her to speak! She dare not deny it!"

Belle saw that she had failed again, and she gathered up her forces for a courageous retreat.

"The world is full of men," said she. "I'll have a rich husband yet! *Ce monde est plein de fous. Au revoir*, good people. I'll leave you to settle your affairs at your leisure. It gets something tedious, *Je pense*; permit me to withdraw, wishing you a very good evening."

She brushed past Zambrano, who stayed for no other words, but jumped into the carriage and disappeared.

"I shall take you in charge, Miss Brandon. This very evening you will set out to join your aunt, to whom I shall fully explain your conduct; and I hope she will feel the necessity of keeping you under her own eye for the future."

"Ah, Tante Isadore!" She laughed merrily. "A most safe and watchful guardian for giddy children, truly! I have not the least objection in life to being taken care of; and you may pay all my expenses also. Luggage-checks, tickets, and such small deer, are always a nuisance I am glad to be rid of."

With a sweeping courtesy and a gay hand-kiss, she passed out of sight, and her voice reached them, while she expedited her preparations, humming in musical snatches, "Must I leave

thee, Paradise," though what her feelings were no one could guess.

Certainly, Craigenfels was not the same place any more to Uncle Alec after she was gone.

CHAPTER XLII.

THE CHRISTENING OF THE SEVEN.

THE new church was completed. It was beautiful within and without, and very proud were the committee of their finished labor. They did not make up their minds till some time afterwards that there was an echo in the centre, which made a sounding-board necessary ; but that was a slight flaw. They sent for their architect and had one made, in form like a sea-shell, and rather plumed themselves than otherwise upon the possession of the sculptured beauty.

Dedication day arrived, and Mr. Growing sat in the pulpit, with a very happy face, and listened to the great Dr. Perfect's delivery of his celebrated dedication sermon. It was a masterly effort, — speculative, — imaginative — far-reaching into the era when church architecture, now but in its infancy, should be immeasurably sublime, and congregations, too vast for computation, should worship together ; when the great, throbbing Christian heart should lift itself in simultaneous orisons ; when continents, electrically united, should chant the same psalms, and millions of pealing organs harmoniously blend their triumphant chorus. The text chosen by the learned divine was a poem in itself : "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as

the rose. And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come up to Zion, with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

Mr. Growing smiled to himself at his thoughts, as the Doctor progressed, and was a little vexed too, he having to preach the following Sunday, and, of course, intending to give a sermon bearing on the new church, had inquired of the reverend gentleman, —

"What text have you chosen for your dedication discourse, sir!"

"You will know when you hear it," was the concise reply.

Mr. Growing was very nearly as absent-minded as Ariosto, who, we are told, once walked in slippers all the way from Capri to Ferrara because he happened to stroll out of doors in that direction; and he perpetrated querities enough, while thinking up his sermon, to keep his chubby sister, who was called Kate in the family, laughing from morning till night; and her usual occupation of following after her brother, picking up his belongings, freshening his toilet, and searching missing articles, which, as he said, "were forever falling down behind," was extremely engrossing. One morning, having taken off his beard, he calmly dropped his best razor into the slop-jar, and turned the contents of his shaving cup into the drawer, left conveniently open, among his wife's best laces; and so, having completed that occupation decently and in order, he took his coal-hod out to the pump in the yard, filled it laboriously with cold water, intending to replenish his study-fire, and would inevitably have treated himself to a small flood, had not his laughing sister, who was tripping after him, stayed his hand in season. He might have eaten paper and drank ink, for all the sense he had of the food he swallowed. He rose in the small

hours, and in simple attire he paraded the floor, stopping occasionally to jot down a striking thought, which he afterwards dried carefully, squatting for the purpose beside a round object he conceived to be a register, but which he afterwards identified as an American article of plenishing called a spittoon. And now, the sermon, which was being so magnificently elaborated in his hearing, had the same text, and, of course, many similar thoughts. He well knew that he had ill-natured critics in his parish, who would gladly accuse him of plagiarism; but it could not be helped, and he decided, while he sat with folded arms and intent face, to preach his sermon precisely as he wrote it. He had put much labor upon it,—considered it a good discourse. He thought well of the child of his brain, and he delivered it *verbatim*.

Sabrina and Zoe worked faithfully at the decorations, and their green-houses gave generously of their treasures. Their zeal was not without knowledge, for Zoe was to be married to red-cheeked Peter, dedication evening. The pulpit bouquets were beautiful. The carved font Jan and young Bradshaw had intended to present to the society, but Captain Slocum took it out of their hands.

"No, no, boys," said he, "that fountain business has recently come within my legitimate spear. I am going to bring forred my seven golden candlesticks, seven rams, seven lambs — there I go again! I vum! I never open my clam-shell to say any thing about them young ones, but I train off into Scriptur. Well, as I was sayin', Dulcet, she's going to have them seven — *critters* / christened afore any other folks' babies are brought up, and so you may hold your horses, for I shall jist put my hand into my trousers-pocket, and pay the bill."

And he did — and the purple porphyry was of the richest

and the roses and lilies carved around the cherubs' heads were perfect, through every veined petal.

The church was crowded, and brilliantly lighted; double rows of seats, six deep, being reserved in the centre aisle, as Mr. Hauxhurst said, "for the mourners" — or wedding guests, he being one of the chief.

Mrs. Goldsmith went, and sat in the corner. Her dress was stiff and black, and she hugged a lugubrious shawl around her lean arms. She looked hideous, and felt perfectly satisfied with herself, being a long way on the road to perfection since we first made her agreeable acquaintance. She *said* she had committed no sin for months. I suppose she considered her welcome of her innocent daughter one of her shining graces. Her sole object in attending upon the marriage service, she clearly stated to be, "to see how big fools folks could make of themselves, running after the beggarly elements of the world." Having had no communication with Fred's child since her loving dismissal that morning, when she had insisted upon all work and no play, she did not know that she was to be among the bridesmaids. In fact, some money matters, which engrossed and worried her, had hindered the close attention to the preparations for the grand festivity she might otherwise have bestowed; and excepting an occasional glowering anticipation of the approaching humiliation "she had got to come to," poor Fred's brown-haired darling was not in all her thoughts. I mistake: a vision of her upturned face would haunt her sometimes, when the parting words she had uttered persisted in being once and again heard. "If you should be sick," — and when she espied her walking in beauty like a rose, she actually grated her teeth, "or something to that effect," those porcelain beautifiers being discarded as false pretences, and she had two minds to dart out and drag her away. If looks could kill, poor Chris's trials had

been soon ended, so malignant, nay, deadly, was the gaze which followed her to the altar.

Mary Ann Nickson was there, in costly bridal robes, looking pale and sad; and her husband, though he diffused an atmosphere of gin around him, probably knew quite well what he was doing, for he laid profane hands on the necks and arms of all the girls he could come at.

Eye hath not seen, *I think*, a lovelier sight than the procession which swept up the aisle. Sabrina, a breathing violet, with Jan Vedder at her side; then Christabel, in trailing robes of rosy pearl, her curls of sun-touched chesnut tucked behind her small ears, a bunch of deep-hued pansies in her simple snood, and on her breast a like odorous cluster, fastened with the curious brooch she just saw, and never forgot, when Uncle Alec bought the gifts for his nieces.

Up at Craigenfels, when she had got dressed, and kissed by faithful Debby, and was waiting in the deep window looking out toward the summer house, her bride's man had come to her, while she was dreading the trial before her, and training her thoughts and blushes to orderly hiding, and he had his hands full of flowers.

"Permit me! Sapho must not lack her insignia," said he; and without waiting her permission, or for a word of reply, he fastened some velvet blooms in their places among her curls, and with a smile he placed others in her hand.

"Come this way," he continued, leading her to the mirror; "I must leave the breast-knot to more dexterous fingers, and here is what will appropriately fasten it," holding up the curious cluster of amethysts and opals. "Despatch, I pray you, tenth muse, and let me behold you complete."

Chris wanted to refuse; she meant to, but she did not, with

him standing courteously waiting, expectant, certain, absolute, and talking pleasantly.

"There is a new statue of you just discovered — a portrait, wrought out of marble, by an unknown artist. I should like to take you to it, and ascertain for myself how much you are to-day like your old Lesbian self. Let me see! *those* features are perfect Grecian, and the *posé* of the head and handling of lyre are wonderful for grace. She wears ear-rings, a necklace, and bracelets, and they are all exquisitely chiselled."

Her fingers trembled; she feared he was about to mention the gems "for Otho's wife," and she dropped her flowers. He picked them up, and restored them, and she made haste to place them as she was desired, and to clasp above them the precious spray of glittering pansies.

"Thanks, Sapho!" said he. "Quickly and prettily done!" And then he threw in a little of the spice he was fond of using in his talk with her, both to please some humors of his own, and for its visible effect upon her. "It is said that the true name of your flower comes from '*paonsee*,' because of its resemblance to a peacock in shape and color, and that it is the *vergiss mein nicht* alone which has the power to give us thoughts; but you and I, sweet Sapho, know better than that; and may we never be so poor as to lack our precious pansies, either here or in those celestial gardens where angels are the wardens."

The tremble and flutter of emotion his words awakened still shimmered over her, while she moved softly up the broad aisle upon the arm of this "dominant" young man, who walked proudly, and was followed by Zoe and Peter.

The people, who know but one way of doing things — the stereotyped folks — drew long breaths, and rolled up their eyes, when they espied pomegranates among the bride's orange blossoms.

soms. Mrs. Walsingham herself had remonstrated, and laid the subject before Peter.

"It is not seemly! Nobody ever heard of such a proceeding! and, besides, the language of that scarlet thing is foppery! That is what the pomegranate means!"

"It means Zoe to me," said sturdy Peter, "and its language is perfection. Leave them alone;" and he got what he deserved, a good hearty kiss from his glowing bride, for his decision. After *the pair* came Dick and Pauline. Here again the fault-finders had material for their vocation. This little couple were in the full dress of Washington's time — court-train, lace ruffles, powder, shoe-buckles, and all — and extremely handsome they looked, and eminently well pleased with each other. Pauline had insisted that Gracie should also have a dress, and walk in the party.

"Why not?" asked she; "Dick's got two arms, and I can't use but one of them." She was, after a long persuasion, overruled by her little mother, and comforted with the promise of a fancy masquerade, where Gracie should shine resplendent.

As soon as the marriage service was ended, the bridal party stepped back in a group around the flower-crowned font, and Mr. Growing placed himself beside it. Dulcet, who was to have the new organ till her place could be more artistically filled, and who had rendered the wedding march in remarkable style, came hastily down from the choir, and soon reappeared from the minister's room, leaning upon the captain's arm, and heading the procession of innocents, or, as the captain kept whispering under his breath, "Seven golden candlesticks, seven lambs," etc. The pale cripple held the hand of the oldest girl, and the others toddled after them, the fresh nurse bringing up the rear with the mite of humanity in her arms which Sonsie and Jan had picked out of the rubbish; or, at least, a good

deal of christening robe and very much cap left it to be inferred that a baby was hidden somewhere among their recesses. Dulcet had taken good care to have printed in clear type the names of the children, fearing that the captain's truant tongue might run its favorite trip among the sevens. They were christened in couples. The pale cripple had already sought and found his patron saint in her corner, and his soft, meditative eyes rested upon her while Mr. Growing sealed him with her name. And then the little girl — "Virginia Marguerita Eglantina." Mr. Growing pronounced the words quite distinctly, and the assembled listeners looked at each other. Old Miss Petingill croaked under her breath like a discontented frog: "Peculiar, how folks can!" When the next pair approached, and the sweet "Morris" had been bestowed upon the pretty boy, and the pastor read from his list "Florabella Cassandrina Fenes-trella," he could not help the twinkle in his eyes; but when the third girl left the font, christened "Ludovica Clotildetta Jasaminta," everybody laughed, and the young minister fixed his eyes upon the ground, and caressed his beard a moment, before he offered the concluding prayer. Dulcet had been too much engrossed in her anxieties, lest the seven should disgrace her by crying, to notice the grinning assembly, and though the captain turned rather red, he stuck out his foot, fifth position, and thus consoled himself.

"So long as my wife is suited, I don't care a darn! Let 'em laff."

And so the wedding and the christening were over. Now occurred a curious phenomenon. Sonsie Eagan, who, though much urged, had declined being among the guests — Sonsie watched them with her bright blue eyes as they passed out, and said eyes filled with tears, all the while being fixed upon Sabrina Bradshaw and Jan Vædder. A handsome couple they

were, she thought, and very likely to stand before that altar some day, as centre figures, in just such a ceremony, they being the same in station, of the one kind, well-matched, and where would she — Sonsie Eagan — be then? And she experienced an angry pang as Jan stepped proudly along with Miss Blashaw on his arm. He had not once looked in her direction; did not even know she was there! He was in gay holiday-face and exquisite dress, and carried himself handsomely. Sabrina looked well-pleased and very beautiful; and then Mrs. Vedder, who only a couple of days ago had called her "daughter," flitted past in rustling silken robes, gleaming in jewels, quite different to the pleasant everyday lady she knew her. Even her dear "white angel" was unconscious of her neighborhood — "so near, and yet so far" — and she, the Irish lassie, separated from them all, "across a gulf" — coarse, rough, unskilled in the graceful acquirements which made them so self-poised, so quietly elegant. She had asserted the fact before; it was no news to her. There was surely no call for the amazing discomposure, or keen sense of outsideness, which pierced her through, as she walked slowly home, alone, her head bent. She fought it out, though, and entered the Horseshoe as bright and cheery as ever. While her brisk feet patted over the floor she revolved her plans, and fixedly settled her energies among them.

Mrs. Goldsmith stalked out of church, stiff and grim, resolving to put an end to all such wicked "fooling and folderols — fetch home her girl, and put her through a course of sprouts, and take the kink out of her." Her eyes, as sharp as those of which Proctor said "they looked as if they could pick up pins and needles" — (though, by the way, who could ever fancy dear Elia with sharp eyes) — covered the unconscious child spitefully, as she glided on; and Miss Petingill told Mrs. Hitchcock

that "the widder didn't look a mite speakful, but she was going to make her talk anyhow."

"Well, what d'ye think on't, Miss Goldsmith?"

"I don't think nothin' on't! Why gaddest thou about so much to change thy way? 'For this, gird thyself with sackcloth, lament and howl. — Jeremiah ii. 26.'"

Before she had completed her cheerful utterance she felt a nudge at her elbow, and a voice whispered, "Widder, widder," and she turned a stony visage upon Esquire Hitchcock, who was winking at her.

"You've got a lot of shares in the 'Sprightly,' I believe; haint you?"

"What d'ye ask that question for?" snapped back the widow, setting her gums together for the ill news she saw in his fallen face.

"Cause it's gone up! busted! that's all. Misery kinder loves company."

"Then my ten thousand dollars is lost!" muttered the old woman through her livid lips; "but it shan't come out of Chandy's part. I'll fix it yet! Yonder thankless girl shall pinch and worry for it. See her flaunting and flippin, in her finery! I'll never pay a cent for them gewgaws! never! The fools that got 'em may look out for their money where they can, and she shan't go off in that are kerrege, when her poor old mother trudges afoot, no!" The widow's eyes glared and rolled, and her face worked hideously, and one corner of her mouth twitched around towards her left ear and stopped there. "I'll drag her out! I'll shame the godless creatur before them all! slap her face! Here, you good-for-nothing Christabel!" She started to run after the bridal-party. "Cursed be ye all! for behold I will send serpents, cockatrices among you, that

will not be charmed, and they shall bite you.' Stop that girl! Pull her out of them clothes, I tell you!"

The crowd parted right and left, and gazed in silence after the black figure, with the working face and wild-glaring eyes, stumbling on into the darkness while the carriage rolled swiftly away.

CHAPTER XLIII

"IF YOU SHOULD BE SICK."

THE subdued noise and flutter of Zoe's reception were at their height. Uncle Alec, with his Coleridge face, "round, ruddy, and unfurrowed as a holy friar's, and his flowing, silky beard—what a benign, smiling face we all knew it!" though something saddened to-day. "What a comfortable, respectable figure."

Mr. Lankman, in swallow-tails and white kids; Mrs. Lankman, in airy costume of sea-green, were the centre of a circle who discussed Christabel's new book. It had appeared a couple of days before in the book-stores, in plain brown binding, and bearing the monogram of the Royal George upon its back, and as it was only a booklet—three hundred pages or so—it had already been devoured by half the Roaring Riverites, who were ready to pronounce judgment upon it. Mrs. Lankman sometimes did little critiques when her worthy husband's duties crowded him. She never saw much good in any thing. The lily itself was scarcely white enough to please her, and somehow in perusing her labored effusions you had a vision of a pug nose turned up in disgust; and as for her English, she had so strained it through the sieve of hypercriticism, that it

ran as heavy as whale oil in winter, and the edges and salient points of her conversation were polished into such glassy primness, that there wasn't left a peg to hang a thought upon.

"It deals with no great problems. The characters are projected with no force. It is a breezy book," said Mr. Lankman, oracularly.

"What do you mean by a breezy book?" asked Miss Bradshaw.

"He means, my charming young lady," said the sub-editor's wife (she had great respect for Sabrina, as eldest daughter of a wealthy gentleman, who drove fine horses, dressed elegantly, and spent money), "he means that this poor authoress has committed the very lamentable error of putting improper language into the mouths of her characters. Their conversation is flavored with slang — the kind of slang which is the ineffaceable stamp of vulgar society."

"Yes, indeed, that's so," said Mrs. Pedlow. "Gentlemen do not talk that way in the presence of ladies."

At this juncture Mr. Pedlow approached.

"Good-evening, ladies. Quite a shebang this, isn't it? The bride cometh up like a flower, doesn't she? By — I must get some of these peaches to take me up for a second smile. You and I had no such splendiferous fandango when we stood before the altar, Mrs. P. Oh, yes, the world is turning round."

"I am inclined to think that my estimable partner has taken a smile or so already," remarked Mr. Starbird, laughing.

"I, for one, am quite surprised. I knew Mrs. Goldsmith was vulgarly illiterate and mean, but still I supposed her daughter was to a degree educated. Her book of course demonstrates that her habits of thought and expression are common and rude, or how could she have put such language into the mouths of her characters?"

Mr. Starbird studied the sea-green lady, and looked amused.

"What a shocking vulgar fellow Dickens must be, upon your hypothesis. The language of some of his people is extremely unchoicé ; and Scott, he should be a swearing, roystering rollicker ; and Mrs. Stowe, a down-east Yankee. But we suppose Dickens to be a gentleman, Scott was among England's peers, and we *know* that the dear womanly author of 'Pearl of Orr's Island' is a high-bred lady."

Sabrina fixed smiling eyes upon Mr. Hauxhurst, who questioned her for her thoughts.

"I was revolving a day spent in Toptown last week, and wondering if all the people I met were vulgar, illiterate, slangy people. They certainly looked like gentlefolks, and some of them filled responsible positions. For instance, papa took me to a bank, where the grave, potent, reverend seigniors communed together.

"'Stocks have gone up higher than a kite.'

"'Yes, gold took a tumble yesterday. The Pandam is dead lock, though.'

"'I don't see that. You can't safely take stock in Spriggins's stories. If you do, you will be up in a balloon before you know it.'

"'Heigho ! I'm afraid we shan't any of us strike ile this year.'

"Two ladies were talking over a pile of silks in the store. 'I've been working at a thirty-horse power rate all the month,' said one. I looked in her face, and recognized a witty, distinguished author, and I went and stood on a corner to wait for the street-car. A group of well-dressed, handsome American youth were in conversation.

"'Going to the concert, Fred ? Little Carlotta beats the field.'

"Well, no, I can't. I'm played out; unless the governor will come down with the stamps, I shall have to shut up shop.

"By Jove, I'm in the same boat. Jordan is a hard road to travel. Who shall find us a remedy for this consumption of the purse?"

"Is that the sort of talk which bears the ineffaceable stamp of vulgar society, Mr. Lankman? because, if it is, I know a good many magnates who are fearfully vulgar!"

"But, Miss Bradshaw, waiving that objection, there is nothing new about this book — no startling thoughts, no deep-lying, far-reaching truths."

Mr. Growing had been listening, and spoke now for the first time.

"Boileau tells us, sir, that wit and fine writing doth not consist so much in advancing things that are new, as in giving to things already known an agreeable turn, and, in my judgment, our dear young friend has admirably succeeded in precisely that. I, for one, sat up till three o'clock this morning to finish her charming story, and I feel better for its perusal. I hate wickedness, and desire purity and truth more earnestly, and am altogether refreshed."

"Give me force, strength, power," said Mr. Lankman, "though, of course, it were idle to expect all that from a woman. The female mind is not constituted to grasp great subjects, nor is it able to labor continuously."

"You would 'heave up truth in spondees, and trundle it down in dactyls,'" said Mr. Growing, smiling.

Captain Slocum being appealed to, said characteristically, —

"Well, friends, it is a darned sight easier to pick a volume to bits than to scratch one together, and if any on you think you could do a story better than this girl did here, I advise you to set down and try it, and when you have turned out a supe

rior article, we'll acknowledge the corn. Won't we, Growing?"

Their critical interview was rather ludicrously interrupted by Mr. Nickson, who came tugging up his unwilling papa-in-law, whom he held in durance vile, encircling his weazen'd little neck with both arms, while he plaintively and with tears proposed his favorite query again and again, desiring to inform himself why the deacon was the handsome lover of the capulet, to the intense amusement of the bystanders.

"Nickson has been drinkin'!" said Mrs. Esq. Hitchcock in the ear of her wedded lord.

"What makes you think so?"

"I know so. Why, what do you suppose the creatur up and done? I declare if he didn't take holt and kiss me."

"He must have been drunk, my dear—as drunk as a fool. No outsider, in his sane mind, would be guilty of that!" replied the Esq., in grim enjoyment of his own drollery.

"He shall be dealt with for light conduct—cut off for guzzling!" Mrs. Hitchcock asserted, very red in the face. "I'll bring him up."

"We may not fellowship such a man, my dear; that's so, but we will keep quiet till we've settled Growing's hash. Mum's the word now."

"Just hear that Nickson gabble—do!" ejaculated old Miss Petingill. "I swon, he won't never fall down stairs for want of a tongue; and there's Adelizy Euphemy! Her ma thinks she's the squinchescence; but if you'll believe me, I see her tother day puzzlin' over a gridiron down to Larky's, and the mpudent clerk told her 'twas a curry-comb, and she b'leeved him. How de do, Dulcet? Law sakes! if you don't look as trim as an old bumble-bee! I wouldn't have believed you could been so soft as to have took in all them young ones

to fetch up ; and I must say I think better on you for doin' on't, and it was a sweet pretty sight to see 'em walkin' up, two and two, and I told Marsha you'd hef to feed 'em on beef's marrow to get 'em strong enough to tug around all them awful names you stuck onto 'em. Massey me ! I hope your health will hold out, and yer money too. I had to laff to see the little dog-skins squirm when he dabbed the cold water onto their foreheads. I wonder how they'd a stood the dose of salt I see the Catholic priest tuck into a baby's mouth once, when he was fisheratin' to a baptism. Peculiar ! how folks can ; and I say, Dulcet, if you want any tailorin' done for that hump-back, I guess I can fit him for you."

Jan Vedder stood before the open window, thinking of a pair of damask cheeks, and lips to match, and two eyes of Irish blue, which had looked merrily into his, while their owner parried with jokes and fun all his arguments to induce her to join the wedding party, and show herself at Zoe's reception ; and the difficulties in his hedged-up way seemed insurmountable. A quick, firm clasp of four supple fingers upon his hand sent the blood galloping, and painted his cheeks with celestial rosy red.

"Ah, Ollam Folda, the stubborn ! Your Eve's curiosity made you to come and take a peep after all, then ! though your perverse wilfulness kept you from complying with the wishes of your best friends to appear here as guest, and you stupidly hid yourself up, like a perverse little tease, as you are, and thought I would not see you," began Jan.

"Hush, Mr. Vedder, sir ! Whisper," interrupted Sonsie, "till I tell you. The widder — she's down of a sthroke, and Miss Chris 'll soon be an orphan. Motherless she's always been, poor dear. You must get speech wid Mr. Otho, and bid him bring out my 'white angel' to me poor arms, which has got no power to shelter her from sorrow, till we break it gently to

her, and take her to the bed-side that'll soon be empty. Ah, purty darlin' ! how sweet she looks, standin' so gentle and modest, and Mr. Otho's eyes upon her. 'Tis easy seeing that he just worships her, for all his high ways. Well, my dream is coming true—deep water, and trouble, and the pale woman who beckoned me to take the plunge."

Jan's horses were at the door, and not much time had passed before they stood by the paralyzed woman, stricken down in the heat of her anger and remorseless purpose. Her black eyes glittered, as they lighted upon the pale face of her white-robed daughter, with a hateful look, from which the poor girl shrank away shuddering, and hid her face in her hands.

CHAPTER XLIV.

SONSIE GOES TO SCHOOL.

THE fifteenth of April was the commencement of the Rosenbloom term, and Sabrina had got to leave her friend Chris with her young heart full of trouble. Sonsie also, much as she desired to stop and help, was ordered to go. Fred's child was quiet and strong, and though she loved to feel the warm arms of the brave maiden around her, and to rest on her courageous heart, she dismissed her to the work which she was panting to commence. The sympathetic Milesian's face was overclouded, and her eyes were wet, and so were her crimson cheeks, when she bade her "white angel" "good-by," and her fervid speeches were as Irish as possible, and full of poetic imagery, and her heart throbbed with true love and the tenderest pity. Her kind offices, however, had been out-

side the sick-room. Once she had walked up to the bed, and Rainbow, following her, had leaped to her shoulder, and looked down upon his prostrate foe. The paralytic's soul was alive and watchful, as her snapping eyes showed, and though her tongue was half dead, she managed it enough to order them out, and she looked the broomsticks and pokers she could no longer wield; and Captain Slocum, who had been paying a visit of neighborly condolence, walked out with Sonsie.

"Good day, my dear," said he, grinning. "You see the widder don't seem to hanker arter your company. I'd kinder save up my pearls, if I was you. Dulcet—she was hopin' you'd make time to look in on our seven golden—*critters*—[the captain pounced upon his word and clinched it with vigorous purpose]—before you go. Your namesake grows heavenly every day. It would fetch tears out of a stun wall to see him fold his little thin hands and pray for us all by name. He never leaves out one. Papy, mammy, Sonsey, Jan, and 'tother six, and I vum! he's took to drawin'. His slate is all the while full of roosters and popple-trees, and all sorts of things. Yes, we'll make an architect or an artist out of that young one, won't we? I take solid comfort with the rascal, and I owe it all to you and Jan. Lord! what a spry fellar that Dutchman is! Why, there's enough stuff in him to furnish fifty of them chaps we see potterin' up and down Broadway, switchin' their leetle canes and trottin' on their leetle legs, about as big as pipe-stems; the vim and pluck all used out of their spidery bodies, and the brains all cooked in their silly noddles, with late suppers and carouses they'd be ashamed to tell their sisters and mothers on, and Natur'—she's sure to revenge herself too, epilepsy, gout, water round the heart, and such. Them's the pleasures she's savin' up for the gay sports who despise her laws. I've heard that Jan used to drink once in a while, but

he's as straight as a string now. He told me he might have died in the gutter, if it hadn't been for a friend who took him by the hand just in the nick of time. [Sonsie's eyes deepened to richest violet, and her breast heaved]. He's as straight as a string now, though, and as healthy as a two-year-old colt, and as full of fun, and a regular team for business. Why, what do you s'pose I caught him and that bridegroom, Peter, adoin' last night? — takin' the road in a 'hop, skip, and, jump.' Jan said he could do it all but a foot, and he used to clear the whole on't, and, I swon, if that are Zoe wasn't settin' on the grass, like a cactus-blow, in her red frock, lookin' on and clappin' her hands, and enjoyin' it as much as the boys themselves. Yes, Jan Vedder is a glorious fellow, and the girl he takes a fancy to may say her prayers, and thank God for setting her inside the pure heart of a whole-souled man. Well, good-by, Sonsie. I declare, I love to talk with you. I hope you'll settle down amongst us, when you've got your learning, and don't forget your namesake."

Our upright, brisk young Celt did not look quite her confident self while she was taking leave of the old familiar places. She possessed to intensity the Irish love for all pleasant spots, which were woven into her memory-chain with links of pleasure; and she was astonished to find so much of Jan Vedder everywhere. In fact, Roaring River and its surroundings of hill and valley were full of the gay fellow, echoed with his laughter, treasured his jokes and quidities, so that she found them everywhere, and his long, sensible talks, his Irish tales, his histories, travels, adventures, and his kind instructions, were tucked away into the pleasant spots, so that she could pause and gather them up at her will. The grassy glen! beyond the forges where the river foams over the rocks, and the lofty Turk's head watches its leaping race — oh yes, there he sat,

on that very log, and recited the "Song of the Shirt," and "One more Unfortunate," and she had cried bitterly over the picture of human misery his words conjured up. Down on the flats — ah! there they two had found the Proddy twins, and his rifle had sent swift death to the laboring breast of poor mad Plug; and what a host of kind, generous acts had followed in natural sequence upon Baxter's illness and her needs. Captain Slocum's meadow — there the rising walls of the new chapel spoke of him, and she recalled free talks she had truly enjoyed, wherein she had uttered and heard plain truths. She went to the up-pasture, and hugged the sorrel colt, who had learned to love her, and she kissed his sleek face.

"I'll never have any ride upon yer back, pretty creature; 't isn't no ways likely, but it was a kind thought of yer good master, and pleasantly spoken, wid his merry mouth, wasn't it, Ollam Folda? He's a brave, fine gentleman. He wears like iron. Captain Slocum says there isn't a flaw in the casting nor a rust-spot on the polish. I hope he'll get him a wife that'll love him as he deserves,— a real, true-born lady."

She sat down on the flat rock, and the old thought obtruded itself, "where'll I, Sonsie Eagan, be then? Oh, aye; I know what is good for him and for myself too, and I'll niver cease to offer up prayers for his happiness, nor for his bonnie mother, even whilst the salt sea rolls atwixt us, and me a teachin' of the poor children in the little mud shealings to home. Ah, Sonsie, girl! ye don't a bit deserve all the blessing yer gittin', and yer 'white angel' so heavy-hearted. Ye ain't half so grateful and cheersome as ye ought to be."

She dropped her face into her hands, and took a good hearty cry. She did not stop to analyze the mixed feelings which set the tears flowing; and Ollam Folda was sorely troubled with her grief, and stuck his cold nose into her neck, and gave her such

a start that she jumped up and laughed, and then looking around her into the bright sunshine and the agreeable colors of hill and dale, she took heart, and wiped her face and kissed his.

"'Tis God's world, coltie, and you and I belong to him, and we'll do his bidding."

Now, this evening before starting, she was at Craigenfels, by especial invitation of Uncle Alec, who had sent for her to take tea with him alone. He had something to say to her. The noble old fellow had never made any reference to his recent experience, and nobody would have guessed from his manner how deep a hold the wicked beauty, Belle Brandon, had taken of his affections, nor the battle-royal he was forced daily to have, trying to drive her out of his thoughts. Sonsie poured the tea, and they ate their rice-cakes and Sally Lunn, and Deb's Tiger-loaf, and cream cheese, and potted salmon, and the luscious strawberries Thomas plucked from his Brooklyn Blushes, and after it was over they went into the library, and Uncle Alec lighted his cigar.

"Well, Roukie, you are about to become a school girl. I am very glad. You will be certain to get on famously — make a scholar, and a useful woman. I shan't be here when you're finished. I may never see you after this evening, but be assured I shall never forget you."

He crossed his hands over his capacious waistcoat, and looked thoughtfully down upon them, and *did* forget her, then and there. After a while a round pipe of hot ashes dropped upon his finger, and effectually roused him, and he raised his eyes, and met her violet soft ones fixed upon him with an odd mixture of resentment and sorrow in their steadfast glance.

"Ah, Roukie," said he, sighing, "it was rather tough on an old fellow, wasn't it? I can hardly make myself believe it isn't

two months yet since I saw that beautiful face of hers in the theatre. What a face it was, Sonsie! what a voice! what witty, brilliant things that brain of hers conceived, and how skilfully and entertainingly she brought them forth. Oh, yes, full of grace and richness every way."

"I wish I could give you a dose of that water that Mr. Jan told me of, that makes us forget. Just consider what a cruel, false heart there was inside of her; then all her beauty turns to ashes, and the rare seeming gets the more hateful for it. Don't ye be fretting after her! don't, sir, I beg of ye."

"But, Roukie," he reached out and patted her shoulder with his large, fair hand, "but I really loved the child." He leaned back and clasped his fingers behind his white head, and the smoke-wreaths curled up toward the ceiling, while he puffed in silence. "There was an old Moor once," he began after a little, "like me, declined into the vale of years, who had a wife, a young and rose-lipped cherubim. Fair Desdemona, herself, that cunningest pattern of excelling nature, couldn't have been a match for yon radiant, gifted child. But he killed his darling, Roukie, smothered her, sleeping, though his very soul was bound up in her love. He killed her in her beauty, but he made bitter moan over her loss. Had she been true! said he, —

" 'If Heaven could make me such another world
Of one entire and perfect chrysolite,
I'd not have sold her for it.' "

"I know how that old heathen felt. 'Tis a pity, Roukie, a snare, to meet such cruel souls, shut up in such perfect girlhood, isn't it? But never mind; we won't think any more about her. I didn't mean to speak of her. I ought to have known better, I suppose; and it doesn't sweeten the dose any, to be sure, that everybody will be sure to say so — not that

I care in the least about *that*. I wonder what will become of the girl, so poor, so wicked, and so very—fascinating? Why, Roukie, she walked out of this room that dreadful day, friendless, with her handsome head up, and her face beaming with defiant smiles. Oh Lord! Oh Lord! Well, well, 'tis a pity—a fearful pity."

"Mr. Craigenfels, sir!" exclaimed Sonsie, boldly, "sure, yer letting down yer nobleness to be dwelling so on yon servant of the divil! ye should hate and dispise the thing she is, and be angry for her conduct to ye instead of speakin' for her."

"I can't hate her, Roukie. I wish she was good; and I can't help thinking what a good time I could have had if seein' her possess and dispense the full life I had it in my heart to offer her, and of which her gorgeous, affluent nature made her capable. A good many years ago, I turned my back upon Craigenfels, because I could not endure the familiar sights, all mixed up with heart-aches. I loved a good young girl; she didn't love me; I love her yet; and though I was very wretched for a long while, I was young and it wore off, and my heart got light again, but I am old now. I can't dream again of any home-joys or home ties; but there was none of the terrible bitterness about that time which I have learned to feel through this girl. My first love is a true, pure woman. Do you know, child!—of course it is terrible nonsense—but I hate the smell of those heliotropes. She never shook her robes, nor tossed back her curls, but there came a waft of that odor. Thomas remembers how I always used to like the flower from a boy, and he thinks to do me a pleasure by thrusting it at my elbow. I can't make up my mind to tell him not to do it. He'd look in my eyes and see just what an old fool I am. I shan't stop here long. I am only waiting to see what is in store for Fred's child; and then I'll return to my

mines and stay there. Set those tell-tale things on the bracket, up there in the cabinet, out of sight, and shut the door, do! Now come here and we will talk about you and your school, and your hopes and plans. That is a very tidy dress you've on, Roukie. Black is a nice color for your fresh skin of lilies and roses. Now, what if I were to choose some" —

"I'm quite well off for clothes, sir; all I need, I assure you," interrupted Sonsie. "Please excuse my puttin' in me word, e'er you'd finished speakin'; and I thank you for the kind intent. I've sold me little black pig, and I've laid out me wages that Miss Zoe give me, and Miss Mary Ann, she brought me a nice frock, and Dennie, he would make me take a pair of shoes from him, and I'm going to school decent and trim. Me heart is light about Miss Ruthie. She's got her brave, handsome husband back again, and the dear Horseshoe is gay wid the perfect joy, and I'd be glad to go to me work, if only 'me white angel' was comforted, and I could see you, Mr. Craigenfels, a bit more cheersome."

"Oh, never mind me, Roukie. Its deuced unpleasant, but I'm not going to die of love at my age. 'Tis too late for the 'worm i' the bud;' and as for little pet, poor child, she'll soon be an orphan, and I shall not leave this till it is over, and I suppose she will come to you at Rosenbloom, as soon as her duty is finished. I wrote to Chandos directly after the seizure, but the doctor says the chances are that the widow can't last for him to get home. I wish she could. Her soul, such as it is, dotes on that boy, and I believe she'll fight death as long as there's the least hope of looking into his eyes again."

And so the last farewell was said. Mrs. Vedder was at the cars, and whispered that she should expect her daughter in the long vacation, and Sonsie's heart was too full for a single word of answer, as she kissed the jewelled hand she held; but she

shook her head, and the fairy lady felt that she disavowed the "daughter," and that her soul said "no."

Jan accompanied the young ladies to Rosenbloom. He explained to them, at some length, that his object was to contract with Batterson for syenite, and porphyry, and gray granite for the chapel, because, as the structure rose, he loved it, and was determined to build his affection into it with precious stones and cunning handicraft; and, of course, Rosenbloom lying only a few paltry hundred miles out of his way, he felt it a bounden duty to see the unprotected females safely housed before he left them.

Susie Jenkins, who had been in New Orleans all winter, was about to enter as a pupil, and Peace Pelican, a tall, dashing girl from Toptown, daughter of a wholesale liquor-dealer, who was piling up money, and manufacturing all sorts of fine wines, brandies, and so on, by the aid of drugs, log-wood, cockroaches, and burnt leather, which brought very high prices, and set on fire the blood and souls of the drinkers, being itself set on fire of hell. But *that*, of course, was no fault of his. He made an honest living, and disbursed large sums in charities, and kept his family in splendor. The wives and children of those who bought his made liquors, some of them, went in rags, were beaten, starved, and died amid sorrow and shame; but the good manufacturer held his head high among Christian gentlemen. Peace was a great friend and frequent visitor to Deacon McCross's Mary, who loved her showy, pleasing, flirting, witty companionship, she herself being a very wood lark for modest, quiet behavior. She had often seen Sonsie at the Mission school. She had spasmodically assisted there herself, but without marked success. The walks to and fro were quite to her liking, with Mr. Hauxhurst, or Jan, or any other sprightly, agreeable companion; and she picked no end of

amusement out of the oddities and sharpness of the young Cels who scampered into her class, and clapper-clawed and buffeted each other during the exercises, and incidentally treated the teacher to queer bits of information, between the commandments, about their puppies or kittens, and deeply deplored in her hearing the sufferings of the poor pigs, who went up gaitret last flood; and she returned the loud-voiced "How 'd'ye do, teacher," which she was apt to get from one or the other of the young vagabonds in public places, concert-halls, and the like, with vivacious politeness, never turning the cold shoulder to their rags, insomuch that they declared, one and all, that Miss Pelican was a "bully teacher," and a "brick of a young lady intirely."

The faculty of Rosenbloom greeted Sonsie very cordially, and set her to work at once. Her strong individuality and fearless, straightforward way of putting things, was very fascinating to them, and she grew in favor day by day. She had a little surprise when she entered her room the first evening. A great trunk, marked in bold, white letters,—

SONSIE EAGAN,

Roaring River,

stood at the bed-foot, and Miss Filer placed in her hand the key, stating that she had got it in a letter a couple of days before, when the trunk had come up by express; and showed her the four lines it contained, directing her to give it to Miss Eagan, and signed "Flossy Vedder."

As soon as she was alone (which was not until she had given the little teacher full particulars of Zoe's wedding, and every incident she could recall concerning Christabel, about whom it was exceeding difficult to satisfy her, and an oft-repeated assurance that she certainly would return to school), she

opened the great box, and looked in. It contained a perfect school-girl's wardrobe, choice, substantial, and admirably selected. She hid away a good many tears into it, and some prayers mounted from her fervent heart before she corded it up again, leaving every thing just as she found it, and hung up her few dresses, and laid away her neat garments into her bureau, steady and firm in her determination to keep as much of her independence as was left her, and to put her soul into the work which was to get it back eventually entire.

CHAPTER XLV.

"MY SON CHANDOS HAS COME."

WIDOW GOLDSMITH was laid low ; her evil days were come ; her dust was about to return to the earth as it was, and the spirit,—well, God created it. He knows all about it. We won't venture an opinion.

Dr. Groenveldt tried the new remedies after despairing of the old, and all were equally powerless. The hideous contraction of her wrinkled face remained, and she lay at the mercy of her watchers, who fortunately were kind. Old Miss Petingill being summoned, came willingly, and did her best. At first, the half-palsied tongue of the prostrate woman tried hard to order her off, and it was real torture to the stricken creature to have to see them all moving about her room at their pleasure, and she unable to hinder them, looking into her presses, putting her things into new places, where she didn't want them, tearing up her sheets, and using her china, and she lying there, bound, hand and foot, her nimblest and most effective servant obeying her no longer, the hard words and bitter which it refused to

utter corroding her fretted soul. When she could not move her head any more, she turned her eyes as far away from every approach of her daughter as she was able, or snapped them tight together. She would take nothing from her hand, or show the least consciousness of her kind speeches, her dutiful attempts to be loving, even when she spoke of Chandy. "If you should be sick." Well, she was sick, but not softened. The sudden stroke had come before she had had time to arrange that loss, and secure her son, and the thought rankled. None of her many plans for keeping Christabel out of her equal share of the estate could now be matured. Her rule was ended, her kingdom about to be divided.

It was a dreary sick-room, the hideous paralytic, with her distorted, loveless face, her snapping eyes, watchful, vigilant, her parchment skin tightening over her projecting bones, waiting the grim approach of her last enemy — no one knew what were her thoughts. While Mr. Growing prayed, she listened with shut eyes, and let him depart without a look. Even the one name which had power over her would not melt her, though the anxious gaze she fixed upon the door, sometimes, when they tried to cheer her silent soul with hope of the absent boy's return, showed that she was waiting for a sight of him. One evening they were all in her room. Chris was crying in the window. She had just failed in an attempt to get a look from the watchful eyes, — only stony hardness or bitter malignity. She could not bear to have it so; her own heart was all softened and tender, and she longed to get a little assurance that her penitence was accepted, her wilfulness forgiven.

There was a noise of feet upon the walk, and the widow's gaze fastened upon the door with a longing concentration, which seemed like power to pierce the dull material and see her desires beyond. A hand lifted the latch. Then came a

flash of red blood over the parchment skin, and the power of mother-love unlocked the poor tongue whose last words had been cruel to her only daughter, and they were startled by a living voice out from that dead body—a strong, triumphant crying, which pierced their hearts—

"My son Chandos, has come!"

Their eyes followed the glittering glance which clove the trembling air, and Mr. John Nickson entered, with a roll of "Sprightly" bonds in his hand. He also brought death with him, for the hope-gleam faded out of the expectant face, beneath the filmy shadow of everlasting silence, and Chandos, the beloved, and Christabel, the neglected, were orphans.

CHAPTER XLVI.

"THY PEOPLE SHALL BE MY PEOPLE."

THE twentieth of May, three hundred and sixty-five days ago, Fred's daughter met with Otho at the old wall, and as she left her homestead in her black dress she unconsciously turned her steps in that direction.

The day was a faithful copy of that one so well-remembered, and every thing looked so much the same, even to Rainbow, who trotted at her side, that she had need to turn her eyes inward, to find the great changes which had come to pass. She was bidding adieu to all the familiar objects, because she intended to go back to Rosenbloom in a couple of days. She had been since the funeral alone in the great house. Miss Petingill had gone home as soon as her work was ended, because Chris could not bear her prying ways, and the numberless

questions she asked. She wanted time to think her old thoughts, and steadily refused all invitations to leave her home. She had lived much in her father's studio, which she had not for so many years been permitted to enter, and was able to recall vividly her pleasant childhood among the well-remembered objects,—the pictures, easels, the studies, and thousand cherished belongings which poor Fred had gathered together, and made vehicles of instruction to his darling. She assured herself that she had the right to carry out her father's plans, and she arranged her life as nearly as possible to his model.

Nothing had been heard from Chandy, and Uncle Alec constituted himself her guardian till the proper period should arrive for the settlement of the estate. Otho Groenveldt was gone also. He had been all kindness in the trying days, and Chris did not know herself how much he had comforted and sustained her; but his work was done, as it appeared, for he had left suddenly, without farewell, and nothing was since heard from him, and though his *ipse dixit* was the sub-tone in the young orphan's meditations, her old hopes belonged to the past; and as she walked along, she told herself how her future must be an isolated one, and how the promise she had made Chandy, to be his old-maid, home-missionary, seemed likely to be accomplished. An independent life, without hero-worship without the beloved to whom she must say, "may I?" is not the natural one for a young maid to dream of, whatever the strong minded may tell us to the contrary; and although many of our noblest and best live it usefully and happily, still, Chris, who had known what rest and abounding joy a true love for a true man brings to a woman's heart, Chris, felt a little dreary in looking adown the vale of time and seeing no husband-shadow beside her own in the moonlight, and no guiding manhood to establish her home; and the certainty that she must finish her journey,

an unclaimed waif, whom nobody owns, was not inspiriting ; but she had long before resolved to get all the flavor and relish out of her existence she could coax or force it to yield, and she still meant to have it. The crevices of the rocks were full of reindeer moss, and at her feet, behind the asclepias spikes and last year's mullein stalks, were springing the tiny fronds of the sensitive fern, which she remembered shrinking from her touch that day ; and she plucked some of the pale-green lichens, crimson-tipped cetaria, and fragile maiden's-hair, and bound them thoughtfully together.

"Sapho !" said a well-known voice at her elbow, "I felt sure of finding you here, because I know you have never forgotten the day nor the place. No other day in any of our years (Heaven grant that they may be many) can ever have precisely the color and flavor of that 20th of May. Those vivid fuchsias are gorgeous ; Mr. Bradshaw's lawn is emerald velvet ; the sweet scent of the rosy-tinted apple-blossoms is marvellous ; but *that* afternoon, when the crescent moon hung pale and clear right over there, and the crimson hammock swung from yonder tree, and Chris wore her sun-bonnet on her shoulders, and Pauline and Gracie danced and laughed before her, was wondrous in its completeness. Do you suppose that little Alderney has been cropping the grass ever since ? It seems that she dipped her creamy head in that very spot three hundred and sixty-five days ago. Here comes some fluttering petals from yon topmost bough, falling like voiceless snow-flakes at her feet. The tree was covered with blooms that day. I remember, Captain Slocum told me, as I came up, that there had been a terrible *blowth* on the orchards, and the spring, which lingered then, and produced her treasures slowly, is speeding past us now with flying footsteps. All the buds and bells of May are out rejoicing in the sunshine, and Sabrina's

fallow deer lift their stately crests, and calmly "eye us over." I suppose they studied and admired us then. Ah, Sapho! I could look around, and imagine that I had but just listened to a sweet voice, which flows in musical cadence, reciting the 'Cateral.' 'Tis only when I gaze in the Lesbian's face that I find change; that shy child-life has blossomed into orbéd maidenhood. Last year she was afraid to show me her eyes; to-day she is unwilling. Those mosses — please leave them in peace, and look at me. Come, dear, dearest Sapho! You know me quite well now. You have seen me at my worst and best, and you love me just as I am — *I* can make you happy. There walks not another man on the footstool who can ever be Otho Groenveldt to you. I believe, nay, I *know*, that God made this great self-willed fellow — full of terrible faults, and also full of love and tenderness — to be the husband of Christabel Goldsmith.

He smiled joyously, and reached out his hand. Chris had been looking at him as he desired, and her eyes filled with tears before he finished.

"I hope so, indeed, Otho," she said, as she softly laid her little yielding fingers upon the strong, nervous ones, which clasped them instantly in spirit of ownership, and he noted and understood her gentle sigh, half weariness, half content.

"Bertha says I am a terrible tyrant. You do not believe it."

"I know it thoroughly, Otho — nobody so well as I; but I am not afraid; at least, not much. You must be as merciful as your haughty, imperious temper will let you, and I shall sometimes rebel — oftener submit."

"Nay, my darling, sweet Sapho, you shame me. If ever I feel minded to play the tyrant, I'll remember the rare glimmer of your pretty eyes, their wistfulness, and their timid faith at

this moment ; that will surely keep me in order, or I must be a monster indeed. I am sure that love is a vital principle, and I know it is immortal, else mine for you must have died long ago. But fighting could not subdue it, starving could not kill it. It conquers courage, defies manhood, and I am willing to be its obedient slave."

"You set me a terrible lesson, Otho. I think I learned it so faithfully, that it will serve me for a lifetime."

"I also got a lesson, I believe," he replied grimly, "which sent me adrift, cut loose from all I desired, a lonely man, trying to leave myself behind me and to forget my love. But I could not lay violent hands upon Sapho's image, nor so shut the door upon it that it was not ever present with me. I don't think I shall make the worse husband though, for my lesson."

"Truth is serious, and has few friends, but I have accepted it even when it cut deepest, and I'll try my best to make a more perfect wife for mine," replied Chris, simply.

After a long pause, during which both were thoughtful, Otho said in his peculiar, quick, sedate fashion, "When will you go in at the door of the little church on my arm, and come forth my very own?"

"When, Otho ! I cannot answer that. I must go to school Thursday, and there are three busy years before me, you know, of hard study."

"Now I am going to begin to play tyrant, Sapho, and say you shall not return to Rosenbloom."

Chris raised her eyes — a little shade of disappointment dropped over them, which cleared off into smiling radiance in an instant, drawing light from his true, earnest, steady ones, and she replied quietly, —

"As you please, Otho."

"Perhaps you do not know that your betrothed is an indigo

planter. I must shortly visit my farm, and I cannot bear again to put the deep sea between me and my treasure. It is good of you to give up your promised joy of graduation at Rosenbloom. I thank you truly. I will never forget it, nor your fashion, passing sweet, of relinquishment. You shall not give over study, though; and we will begin to live out our dreams, and see the world together."

Chris glanced down at her black robes. Otho's eyes followed hers.

"Take them off, Sapho! I do not like them. They are part and parcel of some old-time customs I count folly, and I cannot bear to see you in their sombre shadow. Your brother is in Egypt, and very likely will go to Hindostan before he comes home again. The say-so of the world is of no moment to us. Your best friends would sanction your immediate marriage, though it would not matter in the least if they didn't." Chris smiled. He saw it, and the grave, pleasant, answering *sourire* played about his masterful mouth, which Chris loved to see, and he continued, "You have a dear friend at Brookside, arrived in the absence of its mistress, who is all ardent to fall upon your neck and give you her blessing."

Chris colored; her thoughts flew to Madame.

"It is your faithful old teacher, Miss Filer. I brought her away with me, because I seemed to know you desired to have her. I understood that you would not turn your back upon your father's house till you are mine, and I could not permit you to stay alone. You should have seen her when I proposed the arrangement. Nothing except my height, saved me from a kiss."

"Dearest Filer!" exclaimed Chris. "I must hasten to her."

"Yes, Sapho, — and my father and mother are shortly com-

ing to bless their daughter. If any thing in the wide world could heap my joy, it would be my dear, good father's pleasure in you. He loves his pupil very dearly. And my mother — nay, do not hide your face — my mother also loves you. She told me so, with some words of confession I hated to hear her speak — and I entreat you to meet her half-way, as you can gracefully afford to do — you, who have youth, beauty, and every good and precious gift to bestow upon her only and well-beloved son. And now tell me, darling, when will you begin to be my slave? That was your own word, remember; you gave me the right to use it."

"*'Thy people shall be my people,'*" said Chris, firmly, putting away some unwelcome intruding memories. "Arrange my life as you like; it is all yours."

"Thanks, sweet, noble Sapho! I am glad you have disposed of that cloud. Don't let it come again. You and I have both bought our experience, and paid for it. If we had the nine hundred and ninety-nine years of the Patriarchs before us we might reasonably expect to live the last one in tolerable perfection, but as we have somehow got cut down to a brief span, we must even act our parts as well as we can, and waste no time in idle regrets. Now, my bride, I want my way entirely about our wedding. Please me, and wear the habit you wore when you threw away my pansies, and afterward took my Provence buds. Dress your hair in that wondrously lovely fashion, and let me come down with Tramp and Zephyr, and carry you off secretly."

Chris laughed.

"Well, Otho, for a grave, silent man, I must say you hide away a good deal of very nice, enjoyable romance. I shall like that sort of bridal of all things."

"Thank you, dearest. Oh, how rich your sweet face is in

changing lights ; how fresh and balmy your breath comes to me, caressing my cheek ; and how tender and true is each 'arrowy eye-beam freighted with a sigh.' I thank my God for his bounteous great goodness, and I mean to be worthy of you. My Pansy, my Sapho ! now indeed you are mine. Only death shall part me from my wife."

CHAPTER XLVII.

"BLESSED IS THE BRIDE THAT THE SUN SHINES ON."

THE few guests were assembled — the Walsinghams, Bradshaws, Vedders, Slocums, and Groenveldts. Mary Ann Nickson could not come, to her great grief. She was too poorly — fainting and dizzy, and keeping her bed, half the time. Ruth Blair, clinging to her grand giant ; and Uncle Alec, courteous, and rather silent. Mr. Growing walked about under the pines, and talked with his dear friends. The day was a solemn and touching one, because it was the last couple he expected to join in holy matrimony, of his first flock. Though he confided his intentions to no one except his old friend George, — with whom he had enjoyed many restful, strengthening talks, — and was quietly awaiting the developments of ripening time, he felt pretty well convinced that his course struck off from Roaring River. Miss Filer, red-nosed and tearful, but very happy, sat on a rustic bench, and looked expectantly down the winding path. Sonsie, with Rainbow in her arms and Flirt at her feet, was beside her, and of course Jan Vedder leaned against a tree-trunk close by — Sonsie, who had set her face as a *rosy* flint to oppose his entreaties for her

presence at this very festivity, and who gladly yielded to Chris's imperative commands, and grasped eagerly the proffered pleasure made rightfully hers. The sky was adorned with light masses of cumulus clouds, softer than carded wool, and the sapphire beyond them was as deep as Sonsie's eyes at the zenith, and melted away down by the horizon into palest azure. If they had prayed for the day (they did, for aught I know), it couldn't have been more perfect.

"Blessed is the bride that the sun shines on!" said Sonsie. "I could fancy that other white angels are watching behind yon fleecy veil, to get a look at mine. Ah! I wonder if poor Bax can see her. He's up there somewhere's, and my little sister Malley, and my handsome father, — they're all there, sure and certain, though no masses were iver said for their souls, and their poor bodies went to rest in unconsecrated ground."

"Sonsie!" exclaimed Filer, "are you a Catholic?"

"The O'Rourkes is, ma'am, and the Eagans. I can't justly be said to be, because there was no money for me confirmation frock, and we bein' too poor to pay church dues after we come to Roaring River, Father O'Gorman didn't take the trouble to hunt us up, and saving the time he interfered to prevent little Briefne from gettin' the good home wid Mrs. Blair, — bad luck to him, — he just left us alone entirely; and so I am a kind of outsider. He says I'll go straight to hell, if I don't come to confession, and take Holy Communion, and die at the end in the bosom of the Church; but Christ is merciful, and if I'm likely to get left out of heaven on account of not tellin' *him* what I know, why, the blessed Mary, she'll intercede, I'm sure."

"Do you pray to the Virgin?" inquired Filer, severely.

"Sometimes, ma'am. The aves slip easily off my tongue, because it is hard to forget what the good mammy teaches

at her knee. 'Twill not harm me if I do ; will it, Mr. Growing ?'

The pastor smiled.

"Wasted breath, Sonsie," said he. "Christ bids us come to him ; he nowhere directs us to pray to his mother. If it had been wise or expedient for us to do so, he would surely have told us. He neglected several excellent opportunities: for instance, when they came and said to him, 'Behold, thy mother standeth without, desiring to speak to thee,' he replied, 'Who is my mother ?' and stretching forth his hand to his disciples, exclaimed, 'Behold my mother and my brethren.' If he had intended that Mary should be exalted or adored, surely he would have made them understand his wishes then ; but on the contrary, we are not informed that he complied with her request to see him. And again, at the marriage in Cana, when his mother told him they had no wine, he replied, 'Woman, what have I to do with thee ?' And the idea of Mary's intercession is unprofitable, because it removes our dear, tender, loving Christ afar from us ; makes him seem a hard master, unwilling to listen to our cries for the help and mercy he died to give us. He who is all sweetness and compassion, he says, 'Come unto me, I will give you rest' ; and he always means what he says."

"I do pray to him !" exclaimed Sonsie, with glistening eyes ;
"I love him !"

Pretty soon the pair came slowly riding up the hill, holding sweet converse. Otho took care to keep his bride's attention, with pleasant topics, so that the strangeness of her position should not press upon her heart ; and her face was smiling, nay, radiant, when they drew rein among their friends, and Thomas came and led away the horses after she had been quietly lifted into her bridegroom's arms. Sonsie observed the sparkling

gems she wore, but she did not know that they had been sent from beyond the sea "for Otho's wife." She observed, also, the loveliness of her "white angel," in her quaint attire, and the pansy-wreath which bound her shining hair, and the cluster at her throat, and the blossoms, rare, velvet, odorous, which she carried in her hand, as she knelt before the altar. Mr. Growing's earnest prayer and tender benediction were passing sweet. Chris had got Otho's ring upon her finger, his husband-kiss upon her lips, and they walked down toward the great mansion. The pair paused by common impulse when they reached the little summer-house, and proud Otho took his wife in his arms, and promised to himself to be good to her; and his idea of goodness was exceedingly comprehensive. He thoroughly knew the ins and outs of the sort of man he had got to fight; and if we live, dear reader, we will follow out his married actions, and be our own judges as to how far he kept his word. The dear old Professor came softly to his new daughter, and she threw herself upon his breast. She remembered how she had nestled to his heart in her deep sorrow, and found comfort in his fatherly kindness.

"Papa! papa!" said she.

His ears drank in the musical accents. They came from her inmost soul, and when she slid down upon her knees at his feet, her husband knelt also and received a share in the paternal blessing. Deb was watching for her beloved child when she came down and hovered around, longing to take her to her fond old heart, and have a little cry over her; and pretty soon she got her desire, for Chris turned and saw her eyes, so wistful, and she put her two arms around her neck, and got a good mother's prayer, in which the living Chris and the dead Bessie were all commingled.

Sonsie's face was a study; such deep, lustrous eyes! such

smiles! I almost think that if Jan had asked her then and there to be his wife, he might have surprised her into an answer which would have satisfied him, but he did not know it, though he watched and wished for her all the while; and as for her, he was not in all her thoughts, which were fluttering about her "white angel," caressing her, wondering at her, rejoicing in her, and so expansive was her rich delight, that Mr. Otho also grew glorious in its radiance, and she began to see him worthy of his bride.

They were quite a party at the cars. Uncle Alec, George Blair and his duck, and the pair, all going to Mexico together. And Sonsie saw Christabel's happy face smiling at her, and got the kiss she threw back as the train puffed slowly round the bend, and they caught the shout of "adieu," George sent to them, and Pigeon's little piping echo; and then Sabrina Bradshaw, the well-bred, delicate, dainty lady, who was chary of forming friendships, who had said that Sonsie Eagan was but a servant in the serving-class, who could not possibly be her equal or companion, — Sabrina, the queenly, who had been standing with her arm around this girl's waist, and had been sobbing on her shoulder, put up her mouth and kissed the burning, damask cheek, and sought sympathy for their common loss in the great violet eyes, whose lustre was veiled beneath their unshed tears.

"Come, now, friend," said she, "let you and I go home." And the Irish lassie knew all the deep value of the earnest words, and was exceeding grateful and well-pleased "across her gulf."

"Yes, Miss Bradshaw, it is indeed time; we've naught more to keep us here, and I must say you good-by."

She picked up Rainbow, whom his departing mistress had consigned to her new housekeeper, and dear friend Filer, with many fond kisses, and buried her wet face in his soft fur.

"My 'white angel' is married, for sure, but she is an angel still," said she.

Mrs. Vedder's creams were waiting, as well as Sabrina's ponies.

"Come, my daughter," said the fairy lady, patting the cushions by her side, "come home now. I have much need of you!"

"Oh, no," interferred Sabrina, "she is my guest to-night, because *I* need her, and also because we must rise and journey betimes on the morrow."

"It seems expedient that Sonsie should sleep to-night beneath *my* roof," said the new housekeeper, with fussy, laughing dignity.

Captain Slocum had his cow-ponies ready for Dulcet, and he remarked, —

"Now, my wife and me, we kinder reckon she ought to take a look at our seven golden —"

"Yes, certainly," put in Dulcet, laying an impressive hand upon her husband's arm; "our seven beautiful, precious children."

"Massy me," grumbled old Miss Petingill, who had somehow got wind of the private wedding, and had posted down to the cars to examine the party, "what a fuss them people air a makin' over that poor Irish critter; enough to turn her silly head! Law! how folks can!"

Sonsie, who had been turning from one to another, much amused and also a little softened, said, with fervid feeling, —

"How good you all are to me! I'll try to be worthy of the kind, respectin' feelin's you show me. Oh, yes, I will, indeed. Ye make me strong. But there's a sick lady beyant who needs comfort, and I'll be after goin' to Mrs. Nickson, if ye please, and be glad if I am able to cheer up her sinking

heart a bit, with some lively, pleasant tales about the pretty marriage, — like a book-story, — of the precious lady she loves and could not see. Ah, wisha, I'll never forget this bonnie day!"

"But, Sonsie," said Jan, after the Slocums, Bradshaws, and the rest had left her to him and his mother, "*I think a dutiful daughter's first thought should be for her parents, and I know for sure that you have not been home yet. Of course you are my mother's by adoption; she insists upon that; but there's the Eagan family who have claims upon your attention.*"

"You speak truly, sir," answered Sonsie, trying to fathom his excessive anxiety for performance of her duties. "You say the echo of my very purpose. I'm goin' to kiss me mammy, when fust I've put this bokay, that has the pressure of Miss Chris's putty lips upon it, above me poor father's heart, because he loves her, I'm sure, in the heaven where he's dwellin'."

"Very well, my dear child, quite right; and as full of poetry as you always are. Jump up, and I'll drive you," said Mrs. Vedder, well pleased.

Again Jan interfered.

"No, dearest mamma; you shall not spoil Ollam Folda; she needs a good walk. There is no horse-flesh for her use at present. I am about to conduct her to the up-pasture farm, and exhibit our Irish stock, which *you* know, mamma, is of the choicest."

The fairy lady laughed, and clapped her jewelled hands. "Oh, my Jan is a rare boy!" said she.

"Thanks, mother mine! and so we will bid you a good-by, because our hours are counted, and we have much to accomplish. You must drive the creams yourself, and I shall deposit this girl safely in the maternal arms."

"Come, sir," said Sonsie, briskly; "as you say I need a little step; and I'll try if ye're able to hold the old pace still."

As they turned down the pleasant road, which was nearly a lane, walled in by mossy rocks, they met Mrs. Hitchcock and the charming Adeliza Euphemia.

"Law, ma!" said the young lady, with the spite engendered by seeing Sonsie among the gentlefolks at the station, and the friendly terms they put her on. "Law! if there isn't that gutter-snipe again, and dressed up to fits, I do declare!"

For a moment Sonsie had a mind to turn back and leave Jan; and she felt as if she must be out of place, since he was subjected to such insults in her company; and, if ever she had wavered in her fixed purpose, this would have made her firm as iron; but Jan took the affair easily out of her hands.

"You are unlearned in ornithology, I perceive, ladies, else you would know that this is a rare specimen of paradise bird. Permit me to present you to my mother's adopted daughter!"

"Why, Mr. Vedder! you don't say so!" exclaimed the maternal Hitchcock, who had long and ardently desired to put the dweller at Brookedge on her visiting list. "Do come right along and see us, and bring your parent."

"Yes! pretty creatur, ain't she! Mrs. Vedder's adopted! Well, I declare! Adeliza Euphemy, you must be intimate with her."

As soon as the ladies had sailed out of hearing, Sonsie flamed up.

"Mr. Jan, you'd no right to say that," said she; "and it is false, sir!"

"Yes, I had a perfect right; you know my mother always calls you daughter. I heard her, to-day, and you can't help yourself. She can adopt you if she pleases, and make you her heir, also, if it comes to that."

Sonsie was absolutely breathless, very nearly frightened, no put it so much as a finished thing, — a matter of course, — and she made haste to assert herself.

"You'll have to drop that kind of talk, Mr. Vedder, or you will force me to take leave of you once for all. I am Sonsie Eagan, and you know it; and I count it real unkind of you too, when I can't go back on my word to Miss Chris, and am forced to be a debtor to your mother for a season. But I'll get me independence again, sooner nor ye think; and, as for that young woman, with her tallow face and her corkscrew curls, she is far wiser nor you are; and she speaks but as the world speaks."

Jan saw that he was on dangerous ground, and made haste to change the subject, and talk about the up-pasture farm, and to enlarge upon the manifold virtues of his new tenant.

"Oh, dear, how purty!" exclaimed Sonsie, who gladly followed his lead, and gave herself up to hearty enjoyment of her walk. They paused in sight of the old stone house, railed in with its trim garden; its great hop-yards, vast barns, and latticed corn-cribs, and the green croft, where turkeys, ducks, Spanish fowls, and quacking geese were enjoying themselves in luxurious plenty, and ever so many motherly hens were calling their broods together, and handsome, sleek cows were waiting to be milked, and a couple of heavy farm horses were drinking at the great trough, through which flowed a running spring, limpid, and clear and some half-grown colts rubbed about the hay-ricks, and the tall well-sweep poised in full view the dripping, mossy old bucket. "How purty! purty!"

"Couldn't you as easily say pretty?" asked Jan, soberly, who — cunning fellow — sometimes used his superior English as a power to help keep the wilful lassie in order, especially after he had made a mis-step, as to-day, and knew that he had

lost ground, and saw and felt that she was thinking over her position and his, and weighing every thing, "across her gulf."

"Pretty, sir," said she, easily. "Thanks! and all the asturs and hollyhorks, and stercions, and those; they're pretty, too."

A tall, well-knit, active boy came through the gate with a hoe on his shoulder, followed by a stout laborer, to whom he was giving directions for clearing the green corn. His hair was red as hair could be, and his eyes as blue as Sonsie's, and his face clean and fresh and wholesome, and though his teeth still projected, they were white and clean.

"O Mr. Vedder, sir!" he exclaimed, in glad tones. "Come and see me colts!" Then, observing the young lady in black, who was transfixed with astonishment, he pulled off his straw hat, and grinned; and Sonsie Eagan dashed through the gate, and hugged her beloved brother, the partner of her early trials, the idol of her inmost soul.

"Dennie, my blessed darlin'! you are workin' on the up-pasture farm for Mr. Vedder, and you never told me a word. Dear, dear Dennie! and you're so grown!"

"No, faith, mavourneen; 'tis meself that I'm workin' for, sure," replied he; "I'm me own man. And look, Sister Sonsie, at the height I've got! as gret as his own; and he's me model of a man intirely."

"Yes, Ollam Folda," answered Jan, observing the pair with pleasure. "This young Irishman is his own master; and it is a widow's home that I have made of the place. You know it was yourself who proposed the enterprise to me; and I hope you will approve of my first widow. There she stands! She employs this mirthful youngster—who, I must say, develops remarkable capacities for work, as well as blarney—as steward."

Sonsie's violet eyes caught a glimpse of her mother, hasten-

ing to meet her. The quick sight of mother-love had espied her much wished-for child, whose helpfulness and bravery had kept her alive in her deep troubles, and she yearned to get a good kiss from her ripe lips; and as Jan stood back and watched the meeting, he was reminded of the Celt's description, "Eyes as blue as the flax-flower, and smile like a gleam of God's blessing;" and he thought it still applied to the comely woman, to whom comfort was bringing back the bloom of her youth. She was very nicely dressed in dark stuff, and had on a silk apron, and her fair hair, still abundant, was smooth and glossy. The gentle blood of the O'Rourke's was very manifest in her quiet bearing; and Sonsie's face was glad and happy.

"Is not this farm yours, Mrs. Eagan?" asked Jan. "Your daughter is an infidel!"

"Yes, indeed, my darling. The holy saints have raised us up kind friends, and this young gentleman is the best of them all. The lease of this beautiful home is ours; and I am more thankful nor I can tell."

"Ah, Sonsie! 'tis jolly to be a farmer. I mean to be a rich one. Mr. Bradshaw says I may, and I'll work for it. Yes, indeed, I mean to be somebody. This is better than boot-black—'Shine your boots, sir? union shine!'—no more of that, dear, and no more street-sweeping, nor starvin' either. You, who are a real lady already, shall not blush for your kindred. We'll school the little ones, and we'll keep the mother nice. (Isn't she fresh as a rose, mavourneen?) I've the chance now that you and me used to talk of in the long nights when we couldn't sleep for starvin' wid the cold; and you may just stand by till I show you what a brave boy can make of hisself."

Sonsie gave him another hug. She was crying, and he

checks were wet, and red as the crimson carnation ; but she didn't care. She flew to the children, and caught them up and squeezed them ; and how her blithe tongue did run ! and how richly she twirled her "r's !" and what a queer mingling of Ossian and Burns there was in the whole family, — Mickie, and Mistie, and Kate, and Briefne, the wonderful baby.

Jan enjoyed himself hugely, and they had a famous supper together, and he talked up the Irish stock with Dennis ; and then they all went and examined the Kerry cows, and the Kyloes, and the Ayrshires ; and Sonsie found her little black pig in a nice tidy pen of his own, munching yellow corn ; and he knew her, and came to have his back scratched with a stick, and grunted out his satisfaction.

Poor Jan tried half a dozen times to make an opportunity to get the honest girl he loved to himself, and ask her the momentous question, but couldn't see it just come right ; and so he left her, as he had promised, in the maternal arms, and returned to think about her, at Brookedge.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

FRIPON THE JOCKEY.

THE Rev. Fred Growing was quite aware of the movement which was crawling toward his removal from his field of labor, but he would not help it with a finger, or notice it in any way. The paper being tolerably covered with names, and much drumming not adding more to their number, the committee waited upon the pastor, to call his attention to it, expecting to overwhelm him with consternation. They

found him in the clerical apartment of the new church, where he was fond of sitting, perfect quiet being insured to him in this his sanctum, no wife nor babies having the entrée, to upset his meditations. Opposite the arm-chair he occupied in the great window, sat, in a duplicate *chaise-de-chêne*, a gentleman, whom he introduced as "My friend Laprise." The two were talking earnestly, and as it seemed enjoyingly, for both were smiling, and looked alive.

The ease, cordiality, nay, absolute friendliness, of his reception, made it difficult for the visitors to open their rather unpleasant business, and Deacon Proddy nudged Deacon Williams, and Deacon Williams made faces at Esq. Hitchcock, who stroked his Saturday-night beard, and tilted his chair onto its hind legs, and kept silence. Mr. Nickson took the matter into his own hands, as he was very fond of doing, and tramped straight down to the point, regardless of polite forms or amiable conventionalities. He had been drinking, and his tongue was limber, and his eyes rather bloodshot ; but he was still far from the state of mind which frequently impelled him to press the inquiry concerning the identity of his papa-in-law with the love-sick Montague.

"Got a little business with you, friend Growing. Perhaps we had better see you alone."

"No occasion for that, I imagine, sir. My friend Laprise is a very old friend, tried and weighed, and knows my affairs quite well."

Mr. Nickson treated Mr. Laprise to a stare. He had no idea of such friendship, and there was something in the gentleman's face which affected him unpleasantly, and he experienced a sort of resentment at his interfering presence.

"Don't go, Ernest, I insist. We won't be long. These gentlemen are all men of renowned capacity for dispatch of

affairs, and understand the value of time. I cannot permit you to leave me till we have settled our 'planes of being' argument. It has got to be comprehensively talked up before I can rest in quiet, and I have you so nearly cornered that I long to go in and finish you. Now, then, I am quite at your service, gentlemen."

"Oh, well, if you don't care, I don't know why we should. We have been appointed to wait on you, and inform you that the people are of opinion that your usefulness is about used up here. Preaching don't suit. You don't study enough. *I myself* am obliged to read up a couple of sermons a week, for fodder, from Sunday to Sunday. You don't visit enough. They say they don't see nothing of you. You haven't got any tact — don't notice the children, and such things, and you don't live within your salary."

"*That* is certainly true," remarked Mr. Growing, pleasantly, "inasmuch as I have been living without it for the past six months, thanks to the dilatoriness of my financial committee, of whom Mr. Nickson is one."

"Well, you can't form any idea how difficult it is to raise money for you. You see you are so confounded unpopular, the folks get baulky right off. We got the sense of the congregation before we came, as this document will show," unfolding a long paper, as he spoke. "We know just what horses 'll run."

The young pastor took it, ran his eye down the page, and smiled, though there were some names there he had not expected to see — Dr. Jenkins's, for instance. He observed that it was a Millville document. No Roaring River people, except a few of Jan Vedder's tenants, and a new man who had set up a fulling mill down below, almost over the border into Pleasant Valley, and many of the signers were perfect strangers to him.

It looked as though they had been out into the highways and hedges, and compelled them to come in.

"Gentlemen," said Mr. Growing, placing *very* quietly the list on the table, and laying his hand over it, "if I chose to remain, I could do it, in spite of you. This paper is purely sectional. Not only could I stay, but I could force you to accept me as your pastor, or secede altogether, divide the congregation, take the Roaring River side for my own, and this beautiful church, which I have lived to see completed. I know precisely where I stand. I am not taken by surprise. I have been aware from the first of this movement, and could tell you who have egged it on. Don't be uneasy, gentlemen; I am no promoter of schism. You, Deacon Williams, and Esq. Hitchcock, have stood shoulder to shoulder with me on the building committee, and I owe you thanks. You have contributed generously, and worked bravely and well. But the field is the world. I shall never forget my first parish. I have gained a large experience among you; have been taught many useful things. If God spares my life, I can work better for my stay here. You took me, a boy, and you have borne all my blunders and mistakes, and I go out a man, and I thank you."

Deacon Williams got up, and took hold of the young minister's hand. He had come to the meeting, wife-driven, most unwillingly. The memory of his dead boy was clinging about him. The sick-room days, so rich in blessing to them all, binding their souls with the three-fold cord which cannot be broken, were full of the prayers and holy ministry of this slight dreaming, hard-working enthusiast, whom they were forcing him to conspire against, and weak and faint-spirited as he was, the poor, weazened Deacon felt constrained to lift his voice in feeble protestation.

"We love you, Mr. Growing. For my part, I want you to stay, though my name is down on that paper. As you may say, in a manner, I didn't ought to put it there, and e'namost hoped I could scratch it off afore you seen it. You seem as nigh to me as if you was my own boy. You do, really. I don't know of no mistakes. I never see you make no blunders. I believe the speerit of the Lord is upon you, as much as ever it was on young Sam'el in the temple. I shan't get no minister that will ever be the same to me as you are. My dear, dear boy. I somehow feel as if I wasn't going to stop long, and I *would* like to hev you by my bedside when the dread summons comes. I don't care so much about preachin', but I do think yourn is drefful spiritooal, and your prayers air worth all the sermons in the world."

The Deacon shook Fred's hand up and down, while his watery eyes were fixed upon the young man's working face, and his voice trembled, broke down in fact, before he pulled out his handkerchief, and mopped his cheeks, and went and sat down in a corner, comforting himself with the couplet which seemed to be an unfailing balm in the most distressful circumstances.

"Yes, yes" —

" 'We are a pilgrim and we're a stranger,
We can tarry but a night.' "

"Mebby, after all," began Deacon Proddy, who was much affected, and blew his nose like the blowing up of the trumpet in the new moon.

"Jes so. I think so myself," said Deacon McCross. "I'm afeard we've been drefful hasty."

Mr. Nickson and Esq. Hitchcock, being entirely committed to the Rev. Dr. Perfect, and determined to get rid of Mr. Growing, were alarmed at the turn affairs were taking.

"Soft as squash," said the banker, aside to his coadjutor, "to be bamboozled like that! I wonder how the preacher feller does it."

He could not in the least understand the magnetism of perfect sincerity, honest singleness of heart, and absolute sympathy, which the pastor carried about with him like an atmosphere, which took him out of himself into the inmost souls of his hearers. So great was his power, joined to a peculiar voice of marvellous depth and sweetness, speaking irresistibly to the emotional nature, that I remember, on one occasion, a brother minister of his told me he was affected to tears by hearing him offer a prayer at a funeral, though he was too far off to catch the words of the petition. Of a truth, a coarse-fibred person like the jockey banker could not be touched by any such influences; and he uttered some angry, abusive, personal words in enforcing the necessity of a change in the pastorate, which no gentleman could have spoken, which were a trifle horsey and underbred, if not actually profane for a Christian hero.

Mr. Growing's eye kindled, but he kept his temper, and calmly waited for the supply of billingsgate to exhaust itself, or for the speaker's breath to give out. Not so his friend Laprise. He took up the conversation, and addressed Mr. Nickson in a cutting, sarcastic tone, waving off the "mebbys" and "Jesso's" of the uneasy Deacons, while he fixed his piercing eyes upon the banker's lumpy face.

"Did it ever strike you, sir, how oddly things come about? My chun Fred, here, floored you once, and now, at this juncture, you are doing your best to unseat him. Now, Jackey Fripon, we are all friends here, and it is a good while ago. Tell me, did my Polly lose the three-mile race fairly?"

"What do you mean, sir," said the banker, rising hurriedly. 'What the -- ah -- do you mean by such talk?"

"Ernest, I wouldn't, if I were you. Let the dead past bury its dead." But while he patted his friend's hand, Fred smiled into his eyes with the same genial, fond look he had used to wear when the two were boys together.

"You need not interfere, Fred, my lad," returned Laprise. "Just you keep quiet. *I'm* going to do a little talking now. Sit down, gentlemen. Let us consider this minister-business settled. It was as good as arranged, I think, before you came in. Frederick Rutter Growing won't have to hunt for work to do. Rest is what he needs just now. You have nearly used him up here; worked him like a cart-horse. He has been spinning along, steam up, top speed, no brakes on, and I'll engage none of you have ever said 'rest' to him. He's got to take care of that fine-strung body of his, or he won't stay to enjoy many more such pleasant committee interviews. California will about fit his case for a summer trip. Come, Deacon Proddy, don't let brother Nickson hurry you off. I'm going to tell a story. You love good stories, I know by your double chin. You see this minister, who has been dispensing the word to you, was a college chum of mine. We hung together upon the breast of our Alma Mater. I am afraid we were rather wild fellows. Fred thinks so now. We found plenty of scrapes and larks and fun, upon which to expend our surplus vitality. The vineyard was not open to us then, or, if it was, we did not know it. My dear Fred's pastorate among you has not improved his muscle, but in those jolly days he could pull stroke-oar, and make the best time in the class; and as for base-ball, quoits, billiards, terpins, nothing could touch him, and when he put on the gloves, it was time for his man to square his elbows." Mr. Laprise threw up his fists in a scientific way, which showed off his massive agate sleeve-buttons, and also fully demonstrated that *he* had not for

gotten his youthful lessons in the manly art of self-defence, whatever his reverend friend might have done. "Our class got perfectly mad on the subject of horses ; and those of us who could afford it kept our fast trotters. Nay, Jackey Fripon, I insist. Positively, I shall take it ill of you to leave me in the lurch, before I have spun out my tale. Well, gentlemen, we got up a race — the best three in five, under the saddle — over at Dodd's Four Corners. We had to do it all on the sly, and you may be sure we did not call each other any long names in our meetings. But though we wickedly disobeyed college rules, we made it up in royal lessons — did we not, Fred ? and in all the tight places we stood by each other in those days, and we do still. By Jupiter, don't we, old boy ?"

To the intense astonishment of the Deacons, the chums reached over and grasped each other's hands, with glistening eyes.

"I got hold of a fellow for my trainer and jockey, and I thought myself lucky. I believe he hailed from Canada — half French — I know he was half horse, a capital rider, faithful to my mare Polly. I tell you, she shone like a piece of satin, and I made sure of winning. Jackey Fripon said it was a done thing, though I must say Jackey 'promised like a hogmy, and performed like a pigmy.' The bets were heavy, much heavier than we would have liked to tell our governors, or write home about. I had spent no end of money that term, and I looked to pay up out of my winnings, but when it came to the last heat, Polly broke up, ran mad, went lame, dashed over the rail amongst the people, and kicked up a shocking mess ; and I lost, and my father was a kind old trump, I made a clean breast of my follies, and he paid my debts, and that ended my betting forever. But, as I was saying, Fred, here, who had been watching the horses, eager for me to win,

shouted in everybody's ears that the jockey did it by a trick, and blazed up, and told him he was a 'scoundrelly, cheating puppy,' and deserved horse-whipping, and was all ready to kick him out neck and heels, in his hot indignation. Fred Fultter never could bear any trickery. Jackey Fripon was insolent; showed his fists, talked filth, knocked off Fred's new beaver, and this pastor of yours went in and polished off Jackey handsomely. You ought to have seen the battle, Deacon Proddy! how he punished him! It was the neatest thing you ever witnessed! and I see poor Fripon sports a couple of false teeth, to supply a vacancy which occurred that evening after the race at Dodd's Four Corners."

His explaining finger pointed the moral, and of course all eyes rested upon the banker. The good deacons were quite excited with the racy story, which had about it a strong, smacking relish, and flavor of plucky youth; and their tongues got extremely limber over their own exploits, and the fights and frolics they had known in their "juicy period," and they laughed, one and all, when they contemplated the unfortunate jockey, overthrown and discomfited.

"I'm a self-made man," he growled. "I never said but what I was. What do you want to come and tell on me here for, where I'm leading a respectable life, trying to be useful? I call it dog-gone mean, myself! 'Tain't no harm to ride a horse, I 'spose, is it?"

"No, good Fripon, nor to be a jockey, provided you are an honest one. But now, once for all, tell me, as a man of honor and a Christian banker—and I pledge you my word, that if you will speak the truth I'll drop the subject forever—did my Polly lose that three-mile race fairly?"

"Come, you Bog, or Laprise, or whatever your name is, don't you be a blasted fool! You stood by and seen the

whole on't. I wa'n't to blame for your mare breaking up, no more than I am for your reeling off such a lot of d—d nonsense just now in our business meeting."

"Look here, Fripon; you are are rightly named. Look here!" He took a darning-needle from his pocket-book, and held it up before the banker. "Tom Knox gave me that! I saw him pull it out of Polly's shoulder, and I've kept it ever since, and — hold on, Fripon! — I've a couple of witnesses I can produce any time, besides your particular friend Tom (whose oath might not be good for much), who will swear how it got there."

Mr. Nickson looked like a whipped dog. He caught up his hat and slunk away, and none of them moved a finger to stay him.

Deacon Williams, as may be supposed, was not especially delighted with the relation of these jockey experiences of his son-in-law, and he went over the affair in his wife's hearing, when he reached home, with a most disgusted countenance, which changed into pitiful sorrow when he thought of his dear daughter.

"Well, what of it?" was the reply his spouse gave him, when he had finished. "Nickson has got apast all that are now; he's made his money. I ain't goin' to trouble myself to go pryin' and peekin' round, to nose out what he used to was. I don't make no account of the thimble-rig you played along with the drivers, when you was a young feller, though they do say you got your start out o' that and old sledge, two cents a game, when you kep the toll-gate down to 'The Devil's Half Acre.'"

"I have repented of those deeds long since, Miss Williams, in dust and ashes, as you may say, in a manner, and I've done my best to make it up too," replied the Deacon, with some

dignity ; "and I'll right other wrongs before it is too late, if God spares my miserable life. Of course, 'tisin't any use saying any thing about this man. You've gone and married my poor girl to him. I hope he treats her well. She seems to be rather 'fraid of him a'ready."

"Nonsense, Deacon ! don't you be gettin' up by bears, and fightin' of 'em. Mary Ann has got a rich husband, a handsome house, and the best horses in Millville, and I should really admire to know what she could ask for more ! Don't be a fool, I beg on ye, no more than ye can help. Why can't ye keep yer boots still on the rug there, and not be all the while prancin' round, wearin' out the carpet ?" The kind, weak, anxious father was silenced, but not satisfied, and he put on his hat, and went up to visit his daughter, and he looked at her, trying to believe she was not unhappy. She had Nancy and Tip with her, and was teaching them the game of authors, and the Deacon was coaxed to join them, half-afraid, half-ashamed of the novel idea of contributing to the pleasures of his children, by assisting at a forbidden game ; and then he wound up with a quiet, comfortable talk with this growing young Christian, who demonstrated every day the power of Jesus' love to strengthen, refine, and round the character ; and he went home revolving in his mind certain obligations which he had lately become convinced devolved upon him, and with which his grasping love of money was constantly interfering. He was about to make restitution where he had wilfully defrauded, and was thinking up the cases he could remember, and acting them carefully down.

The very first thing he did in the Gonesusset office, on the Monday following, was to take his will from the safe, button it into his pocket, looking through the glass door as he turned the key, and making quite sure nobody saw him. But he did

not consult Esquire Hitchcock this time. He went *ove* to Toptown, to Judge Sistaire, that lawyer of large reputation for honesty and firm will-making, no loop-holes ever being fo and in his legal documents, no flaws in his leases.

"She shall have it jest to suit her, poor dear. I hope she will live a great many years, after I'm dead and gone, to enjoy it, and I know she'll do a heap of good with it too; and to think that Bax should have begged her to speak to me—my son, who didn't dare to ask his own father for what he wanted. Well, well, we are a pilgrim and a stranger, all of us, as you may say. I shall go to him. He *can't* come back to me. I e'enamost wish I could live it over, so'st to try and fix up the rotten spots, and wipe out the stains; but blessed be God! there's a fountain filled with blood. Let us be up and doing, and work while the day lasts, for the night cometh, when no man can work, and there is no speech nor device in the grave, to which we are all hastening."

CHAPTER XLIX.

FRED GROWING'S FAREWELL.



THE new church was full the next morning after the committee meeting, and Mr. Growing preached a splendid discourse. His friend Ernest Laprise, and a brother worker from Canadasset, who had slipped quietly in to listen, exchanged congratulatory glances, and a perfect hush of attention pervaded the assembly. The choir then sang one of the young pastor's favorite hymns—

"What are these in bright array,
This innumerable throng,
Round the altar night and day
Hymning one triumphant song?"

His selections were always from the devotional poetry, mingling pathos and piety, lifting the soul on wings of holy worship; and he intuitively passed by such as this one, for instance, which Dr. Perfect gave out when he exchanged once into the pulpit of the old stone church, "Melchisedek, the great high-priest," which they sung to "Mear," and cut into ludicrous fragments. But then the soul of the reverend divine was not attuned to minstrelsy. He preached sermons an hour and a quarter long, all about "wrath," and considered the services of the sanctuary in which he had no voice as *de trop* and waste of time.

I am clearly getting old! I must be, to prate and ramble thus in my talk. Where was I — oh! I remember. After the singing, Mr. Growing shut the hymn-book and laid it atop of the Bible, and leaned one arm on it, and looking pleasantly down upon the upturned faces, he said very quietly,—

"Will you permit me, dear hearers, to speak a few words from this sacred place, as one friend talks with another?"

A little uneasiness squirmed in among the paper-signers, and a look of expectancy lighted the faces of the other listeners.

"It has been told me that my services are no longer acceptable among my people, and the reasons why, fully and distinctly stated. I do not preach well enough; I do not visit as much as I ought, I have no tact; and more to the same purpose. Now, we are all of the one family, bound to the same mansions, brothers and sisters, and we must waive delicacy, and be honest and true to one another. I like absolute expressions in such cases as these — something tangible — that I may know pre

cisely where I stand ; therefore, my friends, please do me a personal favor. All among you who think we have worshipped, and prayed, and labored together long enough, and that a change would be desirable, oblige me by standing up for one moment."

Mrs. Williams, exceeding red in the face, nodded to Mrs. Esq. Hitchcock, who chewed her dried fennel, and shook her head about, and sat still. John Nickson got half-way up, but as he saw nobody else was going to rise, he slouched down again, and fumbled about, pretending to hunt for something he had not lost. Deacon Proddy pulled his hair up over the bald place, and Deacon McCross murmured "jes so, jes so," — with his eyes fixed upon the minister, and his under lip hanging, and Deacon Williams sobbed in his handkerchief. The Roaring Riverites looked indignant and surprised, the paper having been sedulously kept from their knowledge ; and while the young pastor's eagle glance swept the congregation, a dead stillness fell upon them all.

"What, my friends ! are there none who will stand up to their opinions ? That is strange, since so many of you have been willing to put your names here.

He lifted the paper in full view of the audience.

"Just give me your attention one moment."

He read the preamble and resolutions, which were personal and very nearly abusive in their tenor, and the list of names which endorsed them. Some of the men picked up their hats from under the seats, and threw their bandanas into them ; Mrs. Williams fanned herself violently, and looked very hot ; old Miss Petingill audibly whispered to Marsha, "Peculiar ! how folks can," and some of the other sisters wriggled about and made faces, and sniffed, and wished they were beyond the reach of the young pastor's eyes, and didn't dare to go. Such

a strange, out-of-the-way method of transacting business surprised and affronted them. They had not expected to be dragged before the public so ruthlessly.

"I will detain you but one minute. Please to wait, all of you, my friends, and hear me out. As this is the last time I shall speak to you, I think, with the worthy people whose names I have just now read in your hearing, that the time has arrived when it is expedient for us to part. I have my own opinion of your mode of procedure in the matter, but I hold no malice. I am quite ready to go. The noble church I was determined to see erected is finished, and I congratulate you, my friends, upon its completion. I congratulate myself every time I enter it. You and your children are henceforth permitted to worship the God of your fathers in a commodious, beautiful sanctuary. I am also ready to resign in favor of the Rev. Dr. Perfect, whom I know you have engaged to fill this pulpit, even while it is still *mine*! I am charged with over-going my salary. If you wish your next servant to be useful among you, feed him! pay his wages as punctually as you pay your other employés; give him beef-steak to live on, and he will be able to put heart and brains and muscle and soul into your work! I love you all, *every one*. Many with the love of benevolence; a goodly number with the love of complacency. The children whom I have baptized, I carry in my bosom; they are the dear lambs of my first flock. I hope the Good Shepherd will call them all by name, and they will hear his voice. The young men and maidens whom I have joined in matrimony, I keep in mind; the disciples whom I have welcomed to our sweet and holy communion, I rejoice in. I pray for you *all*, with all prayer and supplication, and I shall not cease to do so when I have crossed this consecrated threshold for the last time; and I ask you to unite with me in requesting the consociation to dissolve

our relations of pastor and people, that I may be at liberty to consider a unanimous call I have received from the First Congregational Church in Canadasset. And — Now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be and abide with you alway. Amen and amen."

CHAPTER L.

THE DEACON'S WIFE HAS A LITTLE SURPRISE.

THE passing bell — toll ! toll ! toll ! — how solemnly it sounded out upon the quiet air. The echoes in the hill-sides could not catch the sobbing note ; the grassy slopes and wooded knolls, where the white shafts shot straight up toward heaven, and the pale wild-flowers growing in their shadow *might* have felt the tremble of the vibrating air, for a grave was opening among the confined dead. The measure of it was as the stature of a man, and beside it, a rounded mound, with smooth-cut turf, and fresh blossoms at its head and foot, and a little pathway, daily trodden by loving feet, led up to it from the dark pond below. Just three hundred and sixty-five days ago, Chris and Otho were married in the little church at Craigenfels ; and Ruth and her giant locked up the Horseshoe, and with Pigeon in brave attire and gleeful humor, bade adieu to their first home ; and Uncle Alec gladly turned his back upon Craigenfels, and the places which had known them knew them no more. The Widow Goldsmith's grave was green. She lay beside poor Fred, but she had no longer any power to rack his ears with scolding, or weary him with complaints. She was quiet at last, and little Miss Filer reigned at Brookside in her stead.

Rainbow ranged the woods and the forest-dells at his own

sweet will, and the fact that a new colony of his race from Malta were especial pets with the small housekeeper did not prevent his purring by the fireside, or sleeping on the cushions whenever he felt like it; and she always read to him his mistress's epistles, and she declared that "the old tom-cat listened as sensibly as folks."

Miss Filer and Mrs. Slocum were choice friends, and held long consultations upon the judicious training of the seven, who grew daily in stature and in grace.

The year just gone had left few foot-prints upon Roaring River, and all things remained pretty much as we left them. Fred Growing's place was not filled, though, owing to some hitch in the arrangements of the Rev. Dr. Perfect. Some folks were so uncharitable as to say he was holding off in order to get more salary, but his admirers did not despair, and the congregation held reading-meetings, and kept the place open for his acceptance.

The new chapel had become a church, and was enriched with many beauties which Jan had pleased himself in collecting. The stained window behind the pulpit was a perfect gem, and the choice woods sent from Uncle Alec's forests were marvellous for richness. People sneered at the busy director for putting so much money into the structure, and called it "Vedder's Folly;" but Jan lived according to his own ideas. He wasted not a thought upon his critics. A beautiful school-house was also in process of erection in the grounds, with a reading-room attached, and a prospective coffee-house, and Jan took solid comfort out of the happy boys, who felt the most jubilant pride in their possession, and the most ecstatic gratitude to their munificent donor.

Toll! toll! toll! Mrs. Deacon Proddy was sweeping her doorstep, and she stopped and leaned on her broom to count the strokes. "One, two, three — Jane Blossom's baby. Well,

poor little innocent creatur', better dead than alive, with nothing but shame and sorrow before it. Scarlet fever carries off a power of younguns; and Jane, she won't stop long behind—six, seven. It can't be her—fifteen! likely it's Bessie Makepeace. I heard she was failing last night. Dr. Jenkins gave her up. Consumption is an ugly word, but broken heart is a worser, and her stepmother *may* feel it yet, strong as she is. She's got to take her turn. Oh, if mothers could only see what their children has got to go through, and they a-dying. I seem as if they'd fight off death and stop till they'd growed a spell. To think of the times that poor Bessie's been through. Well, well, she'll forget 'em all when she gets up to her dear, sweet ma—seventeen, eighteen. Why, it must be Mary Ann Nickson: I saw her look like a ghost to meetin' last night. I told the Deacon when we was coming home, that girl wasn't long for this world. I declare, if it isn't tolling yet. Massey me! got up to sixty, sixty-one, sixty-two. It must be old Miss Petingill. I haven't heard she was down with any thing, but that must be about her age. She don't let on, but I know she was born same year as Jedidiah, and he's going on sixty-three. Green corn, or cucumbers, mebbly, or veal. Well, poor soul, we've all got to go. Bless me, if that don't beat the Dutch. There's the creatur' comin down the road, as chirk as a gimlet, when I was just thinkin' probably she was dead. How de do, Miss Petingill, ain't it desput queer? I heard the bell when it went sixty-two, and I thought it was tolling for you, but you are worth twenty dead cats, ain't you?"

"Pretty peculiar, I should say. What had sixty-two to do with me, pray? you must be sick, to be layin' the passin' bell to me! How folks can!"

Mrs. Proddy was going on to explain that old folks must look to be dropping off along, as their turns came, when her attention was diverted to John Nickson, who came down the

street with Mr. Plantum, both looking weighed down under a load of woe.

"Who is dead, Mr. Plantum?" asked she.

"Deacon Williams, ma'am ; services to-morrow at three ; best hearse ; black plumes ; first-class funeral."

"Deacon Williams ! Why, du tell. What did they think ailed him ?"

"You'd best ask me, if you want to find out, Miss Proddy. I just come from there," said Miss Petingill sharply, still turning over the sixty-strokes in her mind. "I've got life enough left to answer questions yet a while, if you did think I was dead."

"Law, Miss Petingill, don't be offended. It might have been you well enough, and 'twill before long, likely. Come, what was it?"

"Ship fever ! I watched last night. He dropped off as slick as a mitten."

"Well, I declare, and I never knew he was sick ! How drefful sudding !"

"No more didn't anybody. He only got up from New York in the four o'clock train yesterday. Of course it was sudden ; it allus is. He's a beautiful corpse, the wrinkles all smoothed out, and as peaceful as a baby. We've just done layin' him out. Mary Ann, she would stand over her poor pa every durin' minute, and she got the last look he give to anybody. She was his darlin', that's plain to see with half an eye, and then, she went home sick, and I'm hurryin' down to bring up a few notions and a bottle of Mother Bailey. I'm going to nuss ner. Good-by."

"Nuss her, Miss Petingill ? Why, you don't mean —"

"Yes, I do. Of course you haven't heard how she'd got a little girl baby, born this morning. I wonder you didn't ask Mr. Plantum about that !"

Mrs. Deacon Williams got over her second funeral occasion creditably, and as soon as the house was set to rights, she and Mr. Nickson had the will opened. It was a trial to wait that long, but they did. When Esq. Hitchcock got as far as "I give and bequeath to my wife Silence," she put up her grief-bordered handkerchief, and heaved a deep sigh; but when she became aware that she got only the interest of ten thousand dollars, to be forfeited upon a second marriage, she vehemently stormed. Mr. Nickson considered it a capital joke, and "grinned consumedly," but he left off in a hurry when they reached the codicil. Baxter's portion added to Mary Ann's, and, in event of her death without heirs, both to go to her kind friend Sonsie Eagan, with her dear love.

"I won't have it! I'll break the will," roared the banker.

"Yes, indeed, we'll break the will," said the widow; "a nasty, sneaking, cheating, stingy critter! and this is the end of all my pinchin' and savin'!"

Mr. Nickson went home to his elegant mansion, where the poor, pale, patient young wife lay in a quiet slumber, with her baby on her arm. His first visit was to a brandy-bottle on the side-board, and his second to the bed-side. He did not stop for a glance at the fallen face, nor for a look at the child, for which the mother had offered up fervent thanks before she slept. This was a crisis for the banker. Racing, dicing, and drinking had "cleaned him out," and he counted upon his wife's property to start afresh. He did his best to induce the widow to loan him the few hundred dollars of ready money she had not, after he found that Mary Ann's portion was closely tied up, and had utterly failed; and as he tipsily contemplated the sleepers, he felt as if he could murder them both, such burning rage and disappointment possessed him.

Old Miss Petingill was off guard, having gone down to the market to select herself the chicken for her patient's "taste of

broth," and Mary Ann was awakened by a rude shake, and opened her eyes to see her husband half-reeling, half-standing beside her, a cruel devil in his sensual face, his fists doubled, and to hear him pour out a torrent of horrid curses. She shrank away in terrible fright; she had long ago learned the sequence of such a beginning; learned it with heavy cause; and, as she involuntarily clasped closer her helpless baby, he dragged it from her arms and threw it upon the floor, and beat back the poor mother when she attempted to rise, with hellish laughter and foul language; and she soon mercifully lost consciousness of its feeble wail, and with a brutal finishing blow upon her senseless face, he staggered across the room, and took another heavy drink; and when the nurse returned, she found him on the sofa dead-drunk, with his purple, bloated face hanging over the rail, and the mother and child were gone.

Nothing more was heard or seen of the banker in Roaring River after that night, and the bank vault was robbed of all its deposits, and he was lucky to get off with a whole skin, because the indignation of the town's people rose to such a pitch that his life wouldn't have been worth a rush if they had caught him.

Untiring search was made for Mary Ann, and all unavailing; and a month had passed, when, one day, Payson and Tip, who were as usual playing hookey, climbed an old apple-tree, close by the deserted school-house, the first home of the Eagans, and looking down through the shattered window they espied something on the floor, and also a drip, drip, of blood under the battered old door. They ran off half frightened to death, and stumbled over their mother, who was hunting her absent darlings with a raw hide. They withdrew her attention from their sin by a fearsome tale of a sight they had seen, and in a few minutes, the door being burst open, the remains of her daughter, whom she had taken such pains to "marry rich," were before

her, blackened, decomposed ; and the little baby, the unfortunate child she had brought into the world, giving it a brief life, to take it "again, for she, the woful mother, had gone mad, and laid it down, regardless of its fate and of her own."

CHAPTER LI.

PRIDE AND POVERTY, AND SONSIE.

FOR a year and more, Sonsie Eagan had been a diligent student at Rosenbloom. The little disagreeables of her position soon wore off. She kept firmly to her resolution to attend to her business and ignore all taunts and jeers, and as she had assured Ruth, "Sorra a fling the pupils ever got at her, it being impossible to neglect a girl who kept sedulously apart, wasting no minutes." Sabrina Bradshaw was kind, considerate, and helpful before Chris's wedding, and after that she was loving. Peace Pelican was a host in herself, and she espoused Sonsie's interests, at first "out of contrariness" and love of mischief, slyly contriving to get amusement out of the Celtic lassie's quaint English and *prononcé* character, but very soon from warm liking for the comely, blooming maid, who, as Professor Noble said, "worked like a cart-horse."

Jan Vedder was seeking a match span of roans for the up-pasture farm, and announced as much in a brief note to the Ulster lassie, and also his intention to pay her a little visit.

Sabrina was in Sonsie's room when Sarah came up to announce his arrival.

"I'd put on a fresh dress and some new ribbons, if I were you, Sonsie," said she, suddenly, as she left her. "Mr. Vedder likes his friends to appear well. Peace will wear her new buff

cambric, I know, and I shall come down in my purple percale ; and Susie Jenkins has just got a new nansook, with fifteen ruffles on the skirt, beautifully fluted."

Sonsie flushed up, and sat awhile with her eyes fixed on the great trunk, marked

SONSIE EAGAN,

Roaring River,

which was locked and corded in the corner, and then she got up, and brushed her merino, and rubbed away at some spots on the front breadth, and put a few fresh stitches into a darn in the sleeve, and lamerted a little over its general faded appearance, and wished Jan Vedder would stay away and leave her in peace.

She passed a delightful evening notwithstanding, and enjoyed his home news, all particulars of the lives of the inmates of the up-pasture farm, and about the mission boys, and the letters he read from Mr. Craigenfels ; and then she brought forth hers from Ruth and Chris, and talked up their absent friends to minute particulars, and the New York trip, and the seven children ; and really she discovered that she had many subjects in common with the young Dutchman. She was unconsciously proud of his dashing ways and manly carriage. He sat down at the study table, and divided his attentions between her and Sabrina, and his whimsical applications of the lessons, which he enriched with many items not laid down in the text. He attended her at table, while conversing with Herr Groenveldt and Professor Noble on church architecture and farming, and she listened eagerly. When he sang duets with Sabrina she came and sat down by the piano, and somehow the same sense of outsideness possessed her afresh which she had felt in watching them up the aisle at Zoe's wedding.

"I've heard you sing, Sonsie, in Mission School. Suppose

you join us now in some of our old hymns. You ought to have heard Dennie come out on 'Marching on,' last Sunday. He leads the boys now. He has a wonderful voice."

"Dear Dennie! he's a brave, good lad," said Sonsie, with deepening eyes.

"He is indeed a noble, honest fellow, and is making a capital farmer," replied Jan quietly, "and he is fully determined to be a rich man. The proud young O'Rourke begins to talk about founding a family. There is no limit to his ambition; and with his health and vigor he can do any thing he likes."

Sabrina could not help curiously regarding this couple, so oddly drifting towards each other out of the different grades, and felt that Sonsie looked as worthy to fill the place as any lady of them all. Peace Pelican said as much, and added, "Nature makes gentlefolks once in a while, and our brave Sonsie is one of hers. She can't help rising, any more than the cream can help coming to the top of the milk."

Sabrina nodded and smiled.

"Sonsie, dear," said she with a little authority, "come and sing 'Shamus O'Brien' for Mr. Vedder, and I will accompany you."

The maid rose instantly, and if you wished to get an opinion upon her singing, Jan was the man for you. Words certainly failed to express his delight, and then she played some marches and quicksteps, and some of the pretty reels his mother had played upon the occasion of the first tea-drinking, and Jan could hardly believe his ears.

"It seems like magic, Ollam Folda; how did you manage to do it so quickly?"

"Hard work did it, Jan," said Sabrina, "aided by a quick ear and good taste. We think her progress is rather creditable."

"You'll see me again this day three months," said Mr. Vedder when he took leave.

"I hope madame will make you pay well for yer keeping, if you come so often," said Sonsie saucily. "You've a brave appetite of your own."

"I am a farmer, Sonsie, cultivating muscle by hard labor. A useful member of society, thanks to you. No whiskey in my breath to-day, is there?"

"I didn't notice it yet, sir; and 'tis true for you, the manly strength is written all over your face, though 'tis rather red or so still."

"Sun and wind, Ollam Folda. You did not believe me that day on the hill, when I told you so."

"I was very rude that time, sir," she replied, laughing; "but I'd not me fine school manners then. I know better now than to say such truths, Mr. Vedder; and, sir, I do so want to graduate with these young ladies, Miss Bradshaw and Miss Pelican—I like her. She's as frank and outspoken as an O'Rourke, and 'tis my white angel's class; I am sure she'd say I could do it."

"Impossible, Sonsie! smuggle four years into three, and you such a novice."

"Yes, sir, I know that quite well, but I can work. Look at me face; isn't it healthy. See, I'm as straight as an arrow. I never neglect me exercise. I take good care of me body, and I *do* wish it with all me soul."

"But I cannot consent that you should kill yourself, and proud as you are of your abundant vitality and perfect health, you will find that you can use them up. I'm your guardian now, you know. My mother has appointed me to look after you, as long as you are her ward, and I shall be held responsible if any thing befalls you."

"Nothing will, Mr. Vedder. I'm abundantly able indeed."

Ian opposed her wishes till her blue eyes began to deepen and fill, and then he agreed to take the subject to Professor

Noble, and they set off in search of him. They had a long talk, the upshot of which was, —

“She’s a rare scholar, Mr. Vedder ; for besides being quick and ready, she’s a digger, and if she has constitution enough to stand the hard work, she’ll do it, and with credit too.”

Jan hardly knew what to think of his visit. Sonsie had come much nearer to him in these six months, and yet she was farther off than ever ; and when she got out her map of Ireland, and made him study up Ulster county, and dilated enthusiastically upon the school she would have, there in the old place, and the music she would teach, and the needle-work, and the housekeeping, he felt almost sure that the only way to get her for his wife would be to go out a missionary, in which case he might be useful in furtherance of her plans. After he was gone, Sonsie missed him, and she paused in her tasks to think about him, and she put carefully away a little pen-knife he had left upon her desk, after pointing a lead-pencil for her, and also a handkerchief, marked “Jan Vedder.” She did not give it out to the wash, but folded it carefully, and patted it, and it needed washing too, for there was a crimson stain on it, of his blood, from a cut he had made in his thumb while working for her, and she pondered Christabel Groenveldt’s estimate of a lady — “truth, purity, culture” — and so on, and compared herself with others, and measured herself by the standard which had always been peerless with her — “the white Angel” — and she watched carefully, and tirelessly fought the treacherous idiom, which were her rock ahead on her road to perfection.

Six months more filtered away, and Jan was coming again. Sabrina went into Sonsie’s room, and found her sitting on the floor, with her apron over her head. She pulled it down, and got a view of a hot, disturbed face.

“What’s the matter, Sonsie ?”

"It's a struggle between 'me pride and me poverty," exclaimed the maid.

"How is that, dear. I don't understand."

"Oh, Miss Sabrina, I'm afraid I shall have to put on one of Mrs. Vedder's dresses in spite of meself; look at the darns of me!"

"Certainly, my dear girl; of course you will. I have been waiting for you to see it so, and I felt sure you would work out clearly the proprieties of the case in your own time. You certainly owe it to Jan Vedder, the best friend you have in the world, to appear your nicest when he comes to visit you."

"But, oh dear, Miss Sabrina."

"Well, what now? You sit in dust and ashes, but you lament, like Ezekiel, on the hill-top."

"Don't you see, dear young lady, that I'd be putting meself under such fresh obligations if I did; and don't think ill of me — please don't — but I'm awful proud."

"It would be a terrible blow if Mr. Vedder should ask you to marry him, I suppose, some fine day."

"They are gentlefolks, and I am Sonsie Eagan!" She was standing in her old attitude, and looking at Sabrina over her shoulder, and her blue eyes deepened to richest violet. "And I've made all me plans to go to Ireland and be a teacher."

"That's nonsense, Sonsie! headstrong nonsense! There is plenty of work for you to do here, among your own people, too. Don't you love Jan Vedder?"

"He's a handsome, well-contrived gentleman, an' almost a Providence to me, and — but I don't love him for a husband; at least, I don't mean to, and I don't believe I do. I never think of him and me in the one breath. I've always kept me independence good and clear, as far as I was able."

"You are quite worthy to be Mr. Vedder's wife, Sonsie. I hope you will be. I could look forward to long years of de-

lightful intercourse with you as a neighbor. I am sure you will be a useful woman anywhere, and where so useful as wife to a splendid fellow, who has loved you so long and so faithfully."

"Miss Bradshaw, I thought you and Mr. Jan a fine couple, the day ye walked up the broad aisle at Miss Zoe's wedding," said Sonsie, who was more deeply moved than she desired to appear.

"Did you? Well, I believe we were a presentable party. Chris never looked so handsome but once, and that was when she came riding up to the little chapel, in her suit of ancient cut, and her bridegroom by her side. Oh yes, Jan and I looked nicely that day. I remember thinking so myself."

"I didn't know but ye might stand by that altar, wid yer two hands joined."

"Me, Sonsie! and Jan Vedder! Oh no. I shall be a free woman all my life, I think, Sonsie — but come, let us unlock the trunk and see what you will wear."

Very reluctantly Sonsie complied, and Sabrina selected a black silk, and when the Celtic maiden was robed therein, the young lady took good care not to show the admiration she felt, lest she should alarm Sonsie's pride, and lose her labor; but really her comeliness was perfect, and she looked the lady too, with her magnificent hair, her shapely hands and feet; and her motions, though brisk and positive, were supple and harmoniously graceful.

"Come down now, directly, dear," said Sabrina, hasting away to dress.

They waited a little while in the library, and began to wonder that Sonsie did not appear, when they heard her quick footsteps, and she entered with her head up, her cheeks flaming, and clothed in her faded gingham.

Sabrina was terribly vexed; but Jan rose eagerly and continuously to greet her.

"I am the bearer of a message and a commission to you, Sonsie. I begged the pleasure of coming, from Judge Sistaire, who has intrusted me with a copy of Deacon Williams's will, and he desires me to inform you, that you are inheriter of Mary, Ann's portion of his estate, and also of the share which should have belonged to poor Bax, by special request of the brother and sister, whose joint wishes he took the utmost pleasure in carrying out; so that I congratulate you upon being absolute mistress of fifty thousand dollars."

Sonsie sat down breathless, "'Tis the merciful goodness of the dear Christ, who puts it into the hearts of me two friends to give me back me independence," said she presently. "Now I can repay all the money I've cost your mother, and be me own free girl once more. Oh, you don't know how good it feels! Dear Miss Mary and Bax! Ah, ye truly loved me, then! did ye not?"

Sonsie slipped out after a little, and in an incredible space of time she returned, and Jan, highly as he thought of her beauty, was astonished at it, in his mother's black silk and lace collar. The girl was all fervor and fire. "I am glad it was you who brought me the gift, Mr. Vedder," said she, with both hands out. "I could not have liked it from the lips of another body half so well. You have always been *such* a friend to me."

"Thanks, Sonsie; and also for this," touching lightly her robe. "My dear mother's kindness is too true and real to be despised. You are a good girl, and I feel sure you will make wise use of your fortune; and now, in this attire, I dare prefer a request from the little lady who loves to call you daughter. She sends her kind wishes, and desires you to spend the long vacation at Brookedge, and she says you know quite well how much she needs you."

"Oh, my dear Miss Sabrina, I shall never see Ireland," whispered Sonsie. "'Tis all over with me," and she gave in

grandly, gloriously accepted her position, and nobly filled it, and when, after a day at Brookedge, Mrs. Vedder said, —

“Now, Sonsie, you are a rich heiress, and have paid me all off — every dime, with compound interest — *now*, will you come and be my daughter?”

The heart-full lassie took the jewelled hand extended to her, and kissed it. “My lovely little mother, teach me my duties, till I begin directly.”

Jan came in and surprised this tableau. “Congratulate me, my son,” said the fairy matron slyly. “I’ve got a daughter. Come and kiss her, and promise to be a good brother to her.”

“Not any sister for me, thank you, mother; but I’ll tell you what I will do, — I’ll be the best husband that ever the sun shone on, if Sonsie Eagan will take me.”

“And is that the way ye Dutch-Yankees make love,” replied Sonsie, glowing. “I never thought I would let you ask me, sir, but since you’ve spoken the pretty words, and me mother wishes it, I’ll do me best — I always do. I’m getting a little out of that, you know — thank God and this sweet lady — and I, can bring ye truth and purity, and I’m striving for the culture, and the purple blood. There’s a dash of it in me veins. ’Twas Miss Chris who taught me the makings of a real lady, and I love and prize you, Mr. Jan, beyond the whole world. There, now.”

Mrs. Vedder took her new daughter in her arms with a thankful heart, and Sonsie, all smiles and tears, said, crisply, —

“And there goes me new independence, that I but just got the taste of, and I belong to the pair of ye intirely.”

“Mamma, mamma, why don’t the men propose,” inquired the green parrot. “They do, you silly Polly,” replied Mrs. Vedder, picking up the bird, who was doing her best to be of the party, climbing her mistress’s dress with beak and claws

“Polly put the kettle on, and we will all have tea,” said

Polly, in an ecstatic state of spread wings and orange-fiery eyes.

"Yes, Polly, so we will ; and you and I will go and order it," said Mrs. Vedder here walking off and leaving her son and daughter together.

CHAPTER LII.

THE MEETING ON THE ALPS.



YOUNG couple, in Tyrolean costume, sat on a rude bench before a Swiss *châlet*, to all appearance well-pleased with the delightful sunset and with each other. The lady had long brown curls, and great wistful eyes, and her companion, who smoked a pipe, was dark and grave. She was putting the last touches to a picture, which she held up for his inspection.

"I can scarcely believe that we have been four years married, Otho," said she.

"Thanks, Sapho. That compliments me, and yet they have been busy years, and full of variety. Your picture is admirable. It surpasses the high expectation I had on that 20th of May, when you told me you must see foreign lands. You are fully entitled to the trifles I have faithfully kept for you ; and now for the song. You have added to your instruments, even more than you looked to do that day. I think piano, violin, harp, and guitar will do for a lady. You are a rare woman-darling. I thought I knew all your graces and possibilities, but I had not dreamed the half. I find you ever fresh and ever new ; and, Chris, tell me truly, if you were back under the sunshine of that four-years-old day, and knew me as thoroughly as you do this evening, would you say 'yes' ?"

Otho was an exacting man, but he was fully satisfied with his wife's answer, and was still enjoying its flavor, when a little toddling beauty came up and rested her small hand on his knee — a brown-eyed, lovely creature, as like as possible to Chris in her childhood.

"Papa, see!" said she, pointing down the mountain with her baby finger.

"They are here, darling," exclaimed he, rising; "but we will have our song after the moon comes up. I will not be defrauded of the pleasure I have patiently waited these four years for, even by these our dearest friends."

Ruth, and George, and Pigeon, and Uncle Alec, and Jan Vedder. A stately girl was leaning upon his arm, straight as an arrow, with a complexion of lilies and roses, whom the young fellow very proudly presented to Doctor and Mrs. Groenveldt as "my wife." There was a rich twirl still to her tongue, but her English was of the choicest, and she had gotten all Chris's requisites now — "truth, purity, culture, delicacy" — leaving nothing to be desired. She had seen Ireland — its palaces and shealings — and had a good deal to say about them. She had richly endowed a school in the old place, and waited long enough to see it prosperously working, and was satisfied to leave it, having found and taken her proper place in the station she was formed to adorn. "Her price is far above rubies; the heart of her husband doth safely trust in her; she will do him good, and not evil, all the days of her life."

THE END.

